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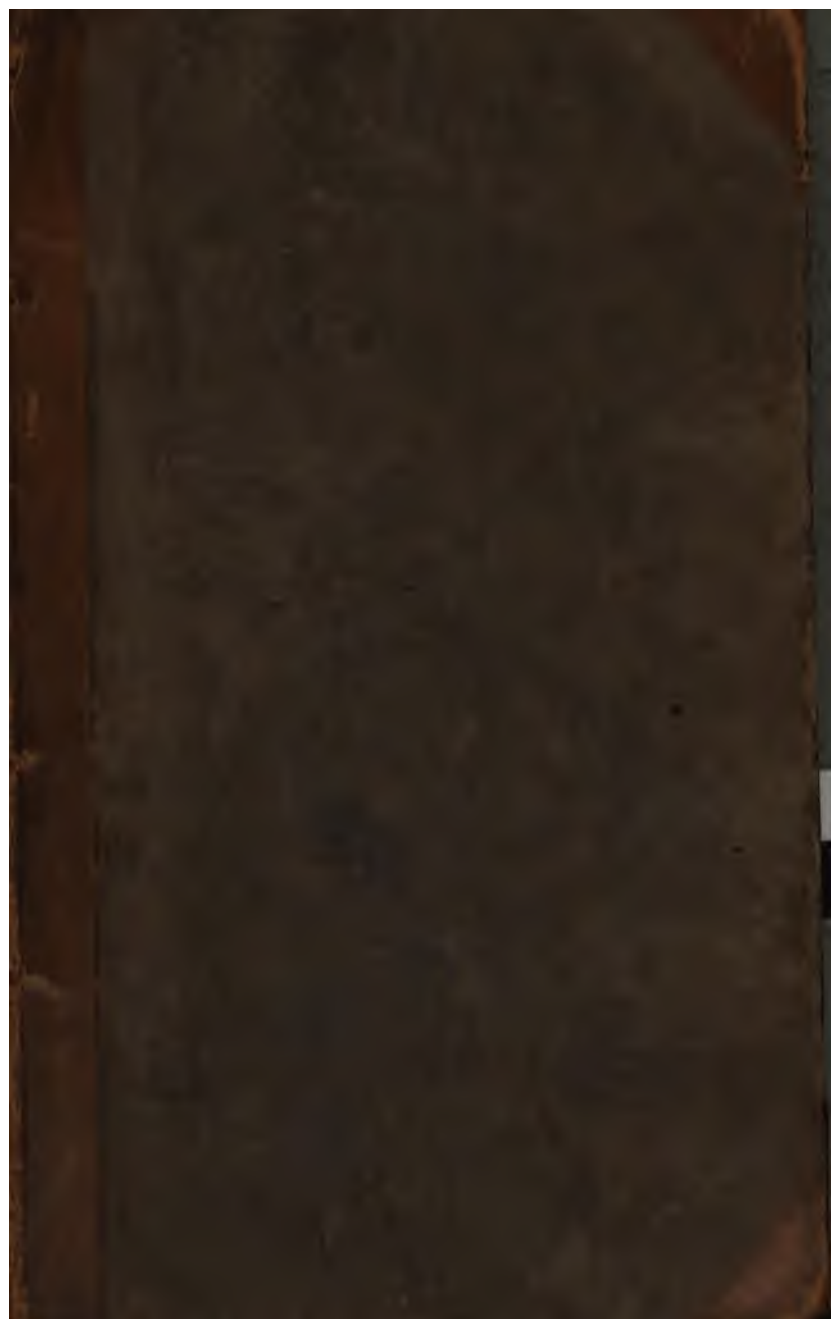
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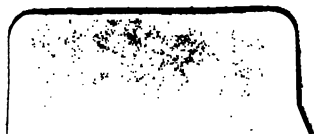
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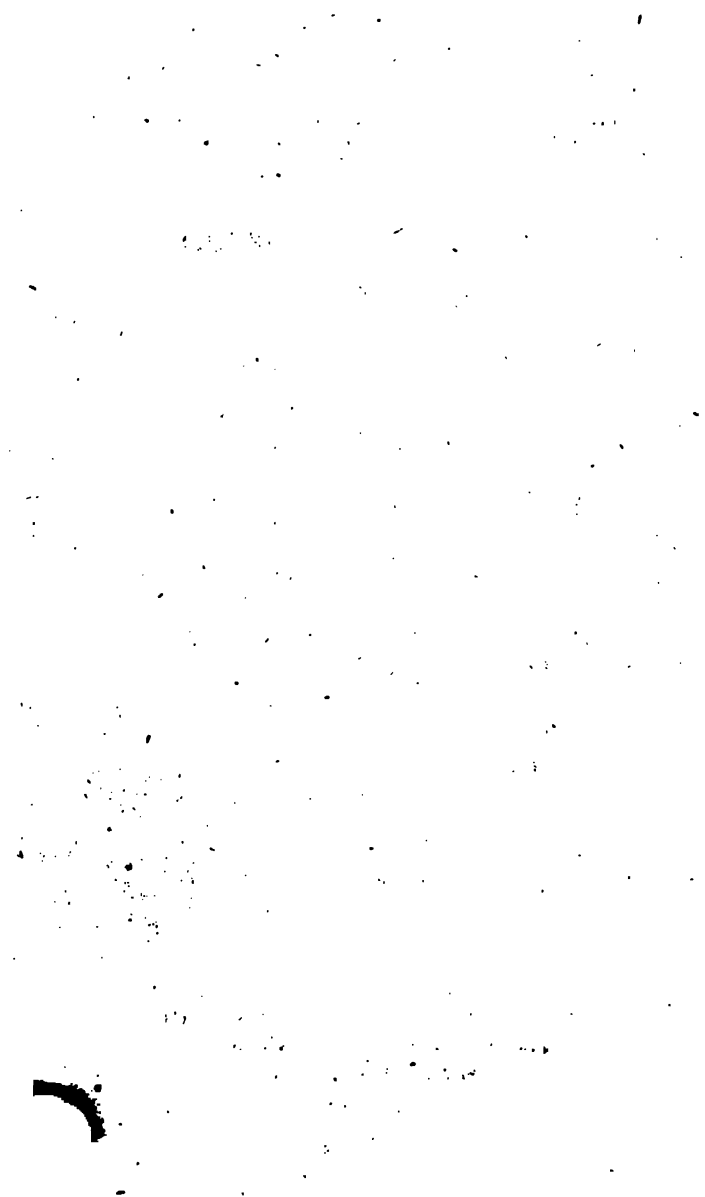
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THE
NOCTURNAL MINSTREL.

A ROMANCE.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall Street.



THE
NOCTURNAL MINSTREL;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF THE WOOD.

A Romance.

•••••
IN TWO VOLUMES.
•••••

BY MRS. SLEATH,

AUTHOR OF

**THE ORPHAN OF THE RHINE, WHO'S THE MURDERER?
BRISTOL HEIRESS, &c. &c.**

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould,
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment!
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air,
To testify his hidden residence!
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty vaulted night;
At every fall smoothing the rayen down
Of Darkness, till it smil'd.

MILTON.

•••••
VOL. I.

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1810.



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Figure 1. A schematic diagram of the experimental setup. The subject is seated in a chair and views the screen through a video camera. The screen displays a target (a red dot) and a starting point (a black dot). The subject's hand is positioned at the starting point. The distance between the starting point and the target is 10 cm. The subject is instructed to move the hand from the starting point to the target. The video camera records the hand's position and the time taken to reach the target. The data is then used to calculate the subject's movement time and the time taken to reach the target.

THE
NOCTURNAL MINSTREL.

CHAP. I.

That strain again!—it had a dying fall;
Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet South,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour.

SHAKESPEARE.

“OH, how enchanting are these notes!
surely some being from a happier world—
some spirit, or some heavenly chorister,
visits these woods, to charm us with
celestial minstrelsy! Listen, Winifred,
but do not speak: Oh, what a swell was
there, and what a cadence!”

VOL. I.

B

Such

to wrap my soul in a temporary delirium, were touched by mortal hand, I have thought, that in approbation of the resolution I have long formed of devoting my days to widowhood, and the remembrance of a husband's love, some benignant—some approving spirit hovers near me, perhaps that of my long-regretted Lord.”

“I should sooner think, Lady,” answered Winifred, “supposing the musician to be a spirit, the spirit of the noble Baron, he would sooner persuade you to throw aside your mourning weeds, and elect another happy bridegroom in his stead, than advise you to pine in hopeless grief, as you now do, for a husband whom all your sorrow cannot bring to life again.”

“I know, Winifred,” cried the Baroness, “that all my grief is unavailing; it cannot,

cannot, as you say, bring him back to me."

"Why, then, Lady, suffer it to take such deep root in your heart? It is now near thirteen months since the news of the Baron's death, after an absence of near two years, first reached the castle, and you are still drowned in tears for his loss, as though the event was but of yesterday."

"Can I weep too long for such a husband? was he not all that my fond heart could wish, noble, generous, and brave?"

"He was, my Lady; but he is dead and gone, and out of so many lovers——"

"I am unable," interrupted the Baroness, "to find one, were I so inclined, that I could even bear to think of as a husband."

"Had I the choice amongst them,"

cried Winifred, "I should not long deliberate: the young knight, Sir Reginald Harcland."

"You are always naming this Sir Reginald, Winifred," said the Baroness.

"He is surely the handsomest man in England," resumed Winifred, "and the most accomplished knight. He rides distinguished at the tournaments, and dances charmingly at the ball."

"He may be all this," cried the Baroness, "and even more, and yet I cannot love him."

"The greater your misfortune, Lady, for I am sure he loves you."

"I am somewhat doubtful on this point, Winifred," pursued the Baroness.

"Doubtful! what, when he has declared it over and over again! when he swears he cannot live without you! when he is
mad

mad almost with extasy at the very sound of your voice, and looks (oh how my heart has ached for him !) as wan as a ghost when you have spoke coldly to him !”

“ He can sigh, indeed, Winifred,” cried the Baroness, “ most profoundly, and breathe the language of adoration at the feet of his imaginary idol, as well, or perhaps better, than any man in Christendom. He can look, too, most woe-begone. But these, Winifred, are not always the certain indications of true passion ; all this may be assumed : yet supposing he does love me, how can I give him my hand, when he is unable to excite in me the same sensations which he himself feels ? would not this be folly ?—nay, would it not be madness ? I am weary of his complaints and importunities ; his perseverance is intolerable !”

"There is but one way, Lady," returned Winifred, "by which you can effectually secure yourself from the solicitations of a love so sincere and so ardent as that of Sir Reginald."

"I would know it then," cried the Baroness, "for in troth I am most heartily weary of him, and would give any thing to be rid of such a troublesome suitor."

"You must marry him then, Lady."

"Ah there, Winifred, you are right; the lover would soon be lost in the husband; but in that case the remedy would be even more painful than the disease of which I complain. As the kinsman of my late Lord, he has claims upon my respect; yet of late he has become presuming—I had almost said impertinent; and I must positively invent some scheme

to

to put an end to his present hopes, if he is still absurd enough to entertain any, and without any absolute rudeness on my part, drive him from my castle."

"How, Lady!" exclaimed Winifred, "drive him from your castle! drive Sir Reginald from your castle! surely, my Lady, my dear, my noble, my honoured Lady, you cannot mean to be so cruel! why, he would fall upon his own sword; or throw himself from some frightful precipice; and how could you endure to think of him, all mangled and bloody, or bear to see him, as you perhaps might, should his spirit (holy St. Agatha protect it!) not rest in its grave, entering your chamber in the dead of night, his face pale as ashes, his eyes rolling in anger, wakening you from a blessed sleep to be terrified with the dreadful vision!—and

then tempt you bewildered to follow it into some low deep cave in the rocks, or into the darkest recesses of the woods! Oh horrible, horrible, Lady! you will not sure drive him to despair—you will not allow yourself (I am sure I could not) to have to answer for being the cause of his death! No, no, no, my Lady.”

“Oh, never fear,” cried the Baroness calmly, “he is too much attached to his own dear person, to disfigure it with a mortal wound; nor will he let his grief, at what you call my cruelty, in any degree hurt his health. But I cannot live thus continually exposed to the importunities of a man, whose behaviour becomes irksome to me; he must therefore, and you, Winifred, may assist me in devising the means, be dismissed from this castle. In this we must, however,

ever, proceed with caution; for he is powerful in the number of his vassals, and in no little favour at court; and might therefore be dangerous, if much offended."

"Alas! poor Sir Reginald! who will tell him? It will be death, Lady, death at once."

"No more, Winifred" cried the Baroness; "will you never have done commiserating this foolish knight?"

"Oh, mercy on us!" cried Winifred. "His body, as I was saying, cut and mangled, pale, bleeding; his wounds, like so many mouths, opened to accuse you alone; all alone, by your bedside; the castle clock striking one; the sheet that wraps him sprinkled with his blood, half raised at the left arm, to shew the death-ground at his heart——"

"Prithce,

“Prithee, Winifred, make an end of thy horrible representations,” cried the Baroness, “or with a little of thy imagination, aided by the lateness and gloominess of the present hour, I shall imagine I see a spectre gliding into some remote corner of my apartment. Methinks it already waxes late. What a clock is it, Winifred? I feel strangely wearied.”

“It is near twelve, Lady; the castle clock has already struck the quarters.”

“Leave me then to my repose,” cried the Baroness; “perhaps the invisible minstrel—Ah! while I speak, the strain; as usual at the hour of midnight, comes sweetly swelling through the foliage of the woods!” Retire, Winifred, I would be alone—I would feast upon the eloquence
of

of those soul-subduing sounds: Good night, and may the holy angels guard you !”

Winifred withdrew, and the Baroness retired to her bed: as she sunk upon her pillow, the music advanced nearer; it seemed almost to approach her window. The strain was sweet, but sad; it became more and more plaintive; and as she listened in wrapt and silent attention, it seemed to come immediately under her casement. Not altogether uninfluenced by the late representations of her attendant, she listened, trembling lest some supernatural object should meet her eye; her heart beat quick; she trembled as she listened. At length, taking courage, she approached the window. She gazed around, but could discern nothing; for a heavy cloud had enveloped the broad disk

of the moon, and not a star twinkled in the sky. She even ventured to call;—no answer was returned. The music stopped when she had spoke; but the strain was quickly resumed: it grew fainter and fainter; the sounds receded toward the woods, died away in a sweet, but mournful cadence, and all around was hushed in silence. The Baroness wondered—was astonished; but unable to account for these mysterious sounds, she returned to her bed, where she long lay lost in conjecture, and agitated by various surmises, till nature at length yielded to the stillness of the midnight hour, and she sunk as by necessity to sleep.

CHAP. II.

O mi Fortuna fella,
Che cambie e queste che tu fai!

ARIOSO.

GERTRUDE, Baroness Fitzwalter, the occupier and now sole possessor of an ancient but magnificent castle, situate on an extensive demeane, not far from the Scottish border, between whom and her attendant the conversation we have just related passed, was the widow of Geoffry, Baron Fitzwalter, a nobleman highly distinguished by his personal qualities, and who, in birth, title, and extensive domains, ranked

ranked among the first of the nobility of the age.

The Baron, during the reigns of Edward the Fourth and the Usurper Richard, had been a zealous partizan of the House of York. Disgusted, however, by the crimes and cruelties of the latter monarch, he had not scrupled, on Henry's declaration of his intention of uniting the interests of the opposite families by a marriage with the Princess Elizabeth, to offer him his allegiance; and to enter into a further alliance with the opponent party, by an union with the heiress of the Barony of Broke, a young lady, whose beauty and various accomplishments, when in her seventeenth year, (at which early age, in compliance with the implied command of the King, she gave her hand to the Baron) had procured her a numerous
train

train of admirers, and caused her to be esteemed one of the brightest ornaments of the English Court.

Notwithstanding the arbitrary means used to effect their union, the most entire confidence and affection subsisted between the married pair; every succeeding year augmented their mutual attachment; and with the exception of the loss of an infant daughter, who had died a few weeks after its birth, no event occurred during the first years of their marriage to interrupt their happiness, or cloud the prospect of their future years.

The war between England and France, and the invasion of Britany by the English, first occasioned a temporary separation of the Baron and Baroness; for he, eager to signalize himself in the field of honour, was amongst those faithful adherents

rents of the reigning monarch, who, fond of the pride of war, and glowing with military ardour, had offered their services in his purposed invasion of France ; little imagining that the shew of a siege at Boulogne was to terminate the achievements of the boasting King ; and that avarice, and not glory, was with him the only motive of the expedition. From this period, though the Baron received many marks of favour and distinction from the politic Henry, he began to entertain a secret disgust toward his government. His neglect of the Queen, his cruel policy in respect to Warwick, who was then a close prisoner in the Tower, his rigorous treatment of the Queen-mother, the unfortunate widow of Edward the Fourth, his mean avaricious propensities, and the little regard he testified

fied for the honour and glory of the English nation, all conspired to estrange him from the court, and to produce a regret for having offered allegiance to so unworthy a monarch.

His disgust, however, for some time was no otherwise expressed than in remaining absent from court, and by inquiring, in common with other malcontents, whether the pretensions of Simnel, who was now practising his impostures in various parts of the kingdom, were founded in truth. But although the Baron was proof against the machinations and contrivances of the partizans of this pretender, he soon fell into a snare, not less injurious to his interests and his honour than that he had escaped. The imposture of Simnel was soon detected; the real Warwick was produced, and the disappointed spirit of
faction

fiction again sunk into repose. Perkin Warbeck, concerning whose pretensions historians are not even yet agreed, appeared in England, bearing the name and title of Richard, Duke of York, and soon became a formidable adversary to the unpopular King.

Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, had recognized him as the second son of Edward the Fourth, having professed her belief in his declaration, that he had escaped from the Tower, when his brother the fifth Edward was murdered by Tyrrel, at the instigation of the tyrant Richard. This her conviction had obtained for this Duke of York the countenance of the King of France, and the support of the greater part of the English malcontents; for the Duchess had sent her emissaries throughout the kingdom, to invite thither
such

such of the English nobility as had been known formerly to have attached themselves to the interests of the York party.

Of these, Geoffry, Baron Fitzwalter, was among the most forward in arms; for influenced by the representations of Clifford, Lord Viscount Lovel, and others, who had seen the pretended prince, he went secretly into Flanders. He was welcomed by Margaret with every demonstration of joy, and introduced to Warbeck, whom he no sooner beheld, than seduced by the striking resemblance he really bore to the royal Edward, to whom he (the Baron) had been always singularly attached, than he immediately acknowledged him as his rightful sovereign, and prepared to follow the fortunes of this daring adventurer.

The

The intrigues and system of espionage practised by the King, anticipated and prevented the serious attacks intended by his adversaries; and the distracted Baroness, to whom the real motive of the Baron's expedition to Flanders, and the consequences of it, were yet unknown, heard almost at the same instant of his death, and that an act of attainder had already passed, by which the Fitzwalter estates had become forfeit to the crown.

Through the solicitations and interference of Lord Broke, the father of the Baroness, who in every emergency had proved himself a steady and faithful adherent to the present monarch, this act of attainder was suspended, and permission granted the Baroness, to hold during her life the free possession of the demesne
and

and estates of the house of Fitzwalter; on her death, they were to lapse to the crown.

This was an indulgence which, considering the jealous disposition of Henry, his insatiable avarice, and the decided antipathy he entertained towards the Yorkists, may appear somewhat extraordinary; but it was proved that the Baroness was not accessary, or in any way concerned in the treason for which the Baron was attainted; and the former services of her family being taken into consideration, who had all of them been active in the support of the Lancastrian interests, a further grant was passed, several months after the death of the Baron, enabling the Baroness, on certain conditions there specified, to transmit her possessions to her family.

CHAP. III.

How does he love me?

With adorations, with fertile tears,

With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was from her father, Lord Broke, that the Baroness first received the melancholy intelligence of the Baron's death; the particulars of it she had learned from Sir Reginald Harcland, a gentleman nearly related, on the maternal side, to the family of Fitzwalter, who had been long on terms of the most friendly intimacy with the late Baron, and from whom the Baro-

ness herself had received many proofs of regard.

After the death of the Baron, as soon, and indeed sooner, than was consistent with the laws of delicacy and decorum, he became her professed admirer. But the Baroness, though she had respected him as a friend, and, owing to the connection which subsisted between the families, and his intimacy with the late Baron, had suffered him to pay her a visit of condolence a short time after his death, refused to receive him as a lover; nor could he, by any arts and expressions of tenderness and affection, vanquish or undermine the steady and inviolable resolution she had formed, of rejecting every alliance that might offer, however noble and advantageous.

Young, ardent, and enterprizing, of a
c 2 disposition

disposition inclined to resist wayward circumstances, rather than to yield to them, Sir Reginald could neither determine to abandon the pursuit, or resolve to surmount the passion he felt for this eminently lovely woman, who, had beauty been her only charm, possessed a sufficient portion of this quality, to have enslaved a heart far less susceptible of its blandishments than was that of Sir Reginald.

The Baroness pitied, and then reproved the warmth of a passion she determined to discourage; for she felt herself utterly unable, independent of her resolve of continued widowhood, to make any return of affection. To her, indeed, influenced as she was by the remains of attachment for her late lord, the extravagant expressions of love made by Sir Reginald seemed monstrous; nay, its very vehemence led her

her to doubt its sincerity; and as she quickly perceived that it was utterly destitute of that tender interest and deep regard for the object beloved—a disposition which constitutes the essence of real love, the attentions of Sir Reginald became displeasing, and even disgusting. Agreeably to these her feelings, she, with dignified calmness, desired him, if his passion were indeed sincere, to combat and subdue a love so hopeless. Her representations to this effect were frequent, but seemingly ineffectual. She became, at length, uneasy and disturbed. She had urged his departure, as far as politeness would allow; yet he was still her guest.

She frequently confined herself, under various pretences, to her own apartment; thus obliging him to dine in the hall, with no other company than her own

c 3 domestics.

domestics. All this, however, was without effect. He assumed a consequence in her absence, which ill became a visitor; and he converted her absences into a proof of his own gallantry and attachment; declaring the days of attendance were well compensated, by a single sight of an object so beloved.

It was during Sir Reginald Harcland's visit at the castle, which had been thus unseasonably protracted, that the mysterious music was first heard in the woods—a circumstance which contributed in some degree to abstract her thoughts from the subject of her present vexation and perplexity; though this event rendered her by no means insensible to the propriety of Sir Reginald's removal from the castle, and she resolved to hasten it.

Nothing could be more calculated to
interest

interest the attention of the Baroness, than this phenomenon of the musician; and the difficulty of discovery increased her eagerness to inform herself who or what it could be that thus haunted the woods. She issued fresh orders, and a larger reward than before was offered for the detection of this extraordinary person. No one, however, could be either seen or traced; the sounds were therefore conceived to be something supernatural. This idea became, at length, so general, that those who had formerly made exertions for his discovery now abandoned the search, protesting they would have nothing to do with a spirit, and except Motley, the clown, or, as he was usually called, the Baroness's Fool, who, agreeable to the custom of the times, formed a part of the establishment at the castle, no

one had courage to pass the wood after a certain hour in the evening, or would even approach within some distance of it; without apprehension, and even terror, from the supposition of its being haunted. Even Father Osborne, the Baroness's confessor, the prior of an adjacent convent, was observed to seek another path, the direct one from the monastery leading along the side of the wood, and to cross himself, if, by chance being delayed somewhat later than usual at the castle, he caught the sounds of the mysterious music.

The Baroness's astonishment every day increased. Her mind was continually engaged and harrassed by the subject, which now perpetually engrossed her thoughts; it was at once pleasing and painful to her soul; alternately it elevated

vated her mind to enthusiasm, and sunk it into the depths of tender grief. She often spent whole hours alone in her oriel. Sometimes she would sit, as if engaged in a rumination so profound, as to absorb every faculty of her soul—sometimes gazing upon the tops of the woods that covered the heights around the castle, and, in one quarter, came almost close to the outer ditch; her eye, as it endeavoured to pierce their gloomy masses of shade, vainly attempting to descry some form which she might imagine to be that of the mysterious minstrel; then seizing her lute, she would strike, for a moment or two, the chords, then throw it from her, as though every note was discord which vibrated not from the strings of that instrument which had so greatly charmed her, that it seemed to have ob-

tained the power of witchery over her senses.

When alone with Winifred, her companion and confidential woman, the course of her conversation could rarely be diverted to any other channel. Winifred, who could not but perceive the strong impression which had been made upon the mind of the Baroness by this really extraordinary circumstance, endeavoured to rouse her from the melancholy which seemed to be stealing upon her, and which was becoming every day more and more perceptible.

The alteration which had taken place in her Ladyship's habit and manners, would probably have occasioned Winifred much anxiety, though the cause was not unknown to her, had not her thoughts been occupied by other subjects, by which her

own mind was as thoroughly engrossed as was that of the Baroness. Sir Reginald Harcland, by his condescension, his flattery, his promises, and his presents, in all of which, since his arrival at the castle, he had been wonderfully profuse, had so ingratiated himself into the affections of Winifred, that she had been extremely anxious for the success of his suit, and had all along spoke of him to the Baroness in terms of the highest applause and commendation ; never omitting any opportunity that offered of representing, in the most glowing colours, the distress in which the entire rejection of his addresses would involve the object of her cruelty ; repeatedly declaring, that were she Sir Reginald, she would never relinquish the pursuit while life remained, but endeavour, by a constant course of attention and per-

c 6

severance,

almost as much authority as the Baroness herself; and she perceived with the greatest satisfaction, that her interest and intervention were diligently solicited by every petitioner for any favour or benefit; and thus, not only in the internal concerns of the castle, but over the vassals and tenantry of the estates of the late Baron, her power was as absolute as her disposition was arbitrary.

The only persons at all likely to interrupt her views, or share her authority, were Genlinson, the Baron's steward, whose long series of fidelity had been gratefully acknowledged, and Motley, the clown, with whom the Baroness sometimes diverted herself, partly on account of his good sense as well as humour, but rather because he had been the favourite and occasional companion of her late lord.

From

From the uneasy fears and vexations excited by the former, from the favourable disposition of the Baroness towards her faithful domestic, Winifred was soon, as she conceived, happily relieved. The good old steward, who had grown grey in the service of the Lords of Fitzwalter, died a few months after the death of the Baron, of a disorder brought on, as was supposed, by grief for the loss of his beloved master. He was succeeded in his employment by a person appointed by Winifred, a Scotchman of the name of Maclawney, a man who, though he possessed a sufficient share of cunning to deceive the Baroness with a shew of honour and honesty, was every way unworthy of the trust reposed in him, his time being chiefly spent in idleness and debauchery. His chief, and indeed only aim,

aim, was to render himself agreeable to Winifred, an attempt in which he was by no means unsuccessful, Dame Winifred, as she was always called, being herself greatly averse to that species of cruelty she had all along reprobated in the conduct of her Lady, and every way inclined to receive the assiduities of a lover, who, besides the advantage of being several years younger than herself, had the means in his power of acquiring riches and emoluments in which she some time hoped to share.

Amongst a train of inferior domestics, was a beautiful girl, called Ethelind, an humble attendant on Winifred. This maiden was the daughter of a mountain cottager, dwelling in the woody heights above the castle. Her mother had died when she was only six years of age; her
father

father married again, though not till some years after the death of his wife, a woman by whom Ethelind was treated with so much rigour and cruelty, that she obtained the kindest interest and compassion from all who knew her. She long bore with patience a series of the severest ill usage; but at length her father died; and the situation of the poor girl, became most pitiable. The report of her ill treatment reached the ears of the Baroness, who, after severely reprimanding the step-mother for her cruelty to a poor unfortunate little orphan, thus left to her care, received her into the castle.

Here Ethelind, who, at the period we mention, was not quite fourteen years of age, might have passed a life of ease and happiness, had not Winifred's apprehensions suggested, that if suffered to be
much

much about the Baroness, she might supplant her in her affections, and put her upon devising means to estrange her from her Lady, her only friend and benefactress; a circumstance which served to render her situation, if not so irksome as before, exposed to many trials and inquietudes.

The Baroness, pleased with her beauty, had at first dressed her in a style superior to that of a common domestic. Her voice was extremely harmonious, and she had desired she should have some instruction in music. She was taught also needle-work and embroidery; and succeeded so well in every thing she undertook, that the Baroness was at once pleased and gratified.

Winifred perceived, with a jealousy which was every instant increasing, the partiality of the Baroness toward her new charge,

charge, and she eagerly sought occasion to ruin her in her esteem; and no artifices were unemployed, by which this scheme, however cruel and detestable, might be accomplished. She was accused of various misdemeanors, which at first, as they were only of a trifling nature, were but little noticed by the Baroness; but as these were continually multiplying, and the poor girl, when accused by Winifred before her Lady, dared not utter a single word in her defence, she began by degrees to abate in that confidence and regard she had at first entertained for her; and instead of being allowed, as formerly, to sit in her Lady's room, and await her orders, the unfortunate Ethelind was now, through the machinations of an envious favourite, usually confined to an apartment near the servants' hall, called Dame Winifred's room,

room, where, except by stealth, none of the domestics were allowed to visit her, and where she usually sat at work till very late in the evening; unless, as was now and then the case, Mrs. Winifred recollected some little matter wanted at the castle, which might be had at a neighbouring village, when Ethelind, with a wicker basket upon her arm, was dispatched to procure it.

These moments of liberty were, indeed, to Ethelind moments of delight; for kept close to her work, and severely tasked by Winifred, to be abroad and unrestrained, seemed the height of enjoyment. The plain, and somewhat unbecoming dress, which Winifred had selected for her, in exchange for that she had first worn, which she had observed to her Lady had been the cause of her becoming extremely

tremely vain and forward, could neither hide the charms of her face, or the natural graces of her figure. Her fine long light hair, as if scorning the restraint of her hat, fell in many a vagrant tress on a bosom of transparent whiteness. Her soft blue eyes beamed with sensibility; her cheeks wore the blushes of the rose; her lips were tainted with vermilion, and when she spoke or smiled, displayed a sweetness of expression, which hardly painting can reach.

Nothing could exceed Ethelind's delight, when she had Dame Winifred's permission to go on an errand into the village, where she was sure to find something to amuse and interest her. These indulgences were however rare. The moments of liberty and enjoyment soon flitted away, while those of employment, sometimes

sometimes difficult, and always irksome, which succeeded, were at once regular and unvaried.

Another object of Winifred's tyranny, was a young man, of the name of Edgar, the son of one of the Baroness's vassals, who, though not an inhabitant, was yet a frequent inmate at the castle: from his extreme vivacity when a boy, he had acquired the character of being wild; this his vivacity, however, never led him into any considerable faults; and as he advanced toward manhood, it became so tempered with prudence, that it was never suffered to proceed beyond the bounds of decorum; and as he wrote a fair hand, and understood arithmetic, even better than the steward, he was often employed to assist Mr. Maclawney in the writing out of his accounts, who, as his head was

seldom

seldom very clear, soon found him very useful, and even necessary to his occasions.

Dame Winifred, though she seldom condescended to converse with the humble Edgar, suffered his attendance; taking care, however, that Ethelind should not be present, lest, as she often observed, he should fill her head with vagaries, by telling the chit she was handsome. Edgar, who had been in habits of visiting at the castle when Ethelind was first admitted, when as children they had played together, had long, unknown to Dame Winifred, cherished a secret regard for the little orphan, which was now, as he had reached his eighteenth year, converted into a strong and tender interest.

Ethelind, thus designedly separated from the companion of her youth, seldom seeing

ing him, could not view him, when accident threw him in her way, without emotions of delight. Edgar, ever upon the watch, let no opportunity escape of seeing or speaking to her: one day, suddenly entering the castle, and seeing the door of the apartment open in which she usually sat, he ventured to approach, and finding Ethelind alone, and in tears, entered the room. He eagerly and tenderly enquired what had happened to distress her, and vented so many reproaches upon those who could be the cause of such uneasiness, that Ethelind, whose distress was now converted into alarm, entreated he would leave her; nor could he for some time inform himself of the cause of her tears, till having pressed the subject again and again, he was informed that she had been severely treated by Dame Winifred

fred, for having, as she said, spoiled a bunch of flowers, she was working in a set of chairs, designed for her Lady's dressing-room, which she had done and undone several times with so little success, that Dame Winifred had declared they were every time worse than before; and had repeatedly assured her she should not be suffered to leave her work, even to go to bed, till she had finished it to her satisfaction.

Edgar, who was astonished at the beauty and elegance of the flowers, and the natural and graceful manner in which they were disposed, and who was utterly unable to behold the innocent Ethelind in tears, without experiencing the most affectionate and lively interest in her distresses, could not, on an avowal of the cause, restrain his indignation; and in

CHAP. IV.

A Fool, a Fool! — I met a Fool i' th' Forest,
A motley Fool, a miserable varlet:
As I do live by food, I met a Fool.

SHAKESPEARE.

FROM the relation of those events which preceded the era at which our history commences, we now return to the Baroness, in whose mind curiosity and astonishment surmounted every other feeling and reflection; and who, notwithstanding the various unsuccessful attempts which had been already made to discover the author of the mysterious minstrelsy, which was still heard nightly in the wood,

wood, was not less eager in her enquiries, or less profuse in her offers, to those who should have courage to pursue the sound, and trace the musician, if indeed mortal, to his asylum or hiding-place.

Day after day, and night after night, passed on, and no discovery was made; the clown had indeed been seen in the wood, but, except the clown, no one dared enter it; and from him nothing could be learnt, as he seldom gave a direct answer to any question, however important; and so little was there of method in every thing he said or did, that he was scarcely considered as rational.

The Baroness, who had heard that the clown had been seen returning from the wood at a late hour in the evening, and that he alone of all the domestics, had

having not that capacity, are obliged to practise from necessity upon those that have?"

"I would gladly have thee lose this capacity, as thou callest it," cried the Baroness, "were it only for a moment. Prithee, good fool, step out of thy fooleries, and answer me one simple question—why dost thou go into that wood?"

"Marry, for the same reason that I would not go to court."

"What is that?"

"Because there I meet no bad company."

"It were a better reason, hadst thou said thou wentest thither to meet good company—But to the purpose. Hast thou, Motley, I mean after evening, when the mantle of night is spread abroad,
and

and begins to embrown with horror the shades of yon drear wood, seen aught in it beside thyself?"

"Thou questionest deeply, Lady," cried the clown. "Yea, I have seen the toad and the adder, the bat, the owl, and the fox."

"I speak not of the beasts and reptiles of the earth," resumed the Baroness. "I ask thee, Motley, whether, in thy nightly wanderings through the wood, thou hast seen any human being, or any thing bearing a resemblance to the human form?"

"Truly," quoth the clown, "I have seen something."

"When?"

"Last night."

"Where—where, good Motley?"

"Within the pale of the wood."

"Indeed! what was it?"

“ A fair and noble figure, of a sweet and delicate proportion. The moon shone bright. I advanced, it preceded me ; I turned, it turned also ; I bowed, it bowed ; I started, it started ; it observed, and copied my every motion.”

“ Thou hast then, indeed, seen something ; speak—speak, good Motley ; what was it that thou sawest ? was it a human being, or——”

“ It was not a human being,” interrupted Motley, “ but the shadow or representation of one ; having in itself no substance, though a form.”

“ This answers to a spirit,” cried the Baroness. “ Of what size was it ?”

“ About my size, Lady ; yet, methinks, upon recollection, it appeared somewhat taller.”

“ Bore it any instrument of music ?”

“ No,

"No, Lady, none."

"Spirits are said to have the power of assuming various shapes and forms: how did it appear to you?"

"In the most pleasing one."

"Describe it, good Motley."

"The moon described it most aptly, I mean the outline; for lacking colours, the moon is but an indifferent painter."

"What did it represent?"

"In the first place, two legs of the most excellent symmetry; a body, with arms correspondingly graceful; a head erect, surmounted and adorned with a cap and bells, singularly ornamented."

"I'll be sworn, fool," cried the Baroness, "thou art describing thine own shadow. Enough of this fooling—speak instantly, and to the purpose, or I will have thee beat for thy ill-timed jestings."

Sawest thou aught in the wood besides thyself, and the representation of thyself in thine shadow?"

"Yes, Lady, I saw——"

"What didst thou see?"

"Two turtle doves in a nest. They were cooing together, and seemed happy. The old mate of the female bird returned, as it seemed after a long absence, and found its nest pre-occupied by a stranger: it moaned, and went apart. I heard its melancholy cooings, from a tree at some distance from whence I stood. It seemed not to have even entered the nest; but sought to hide itself and its griefs, even from those that had caused it."

"Alas, poor, pretty bird!" cried the Baroness. "Then thou hast seen nothing, Motley; yet that wood, they say, is haunted, and under such circumstances, methinks

methinks thy courage might have entered it. Thou hast heard the mysterious music, fool, and yet thou art undaunted. Shouldst thou fear, Motley, wert thou to see a spirit?"

"I have seen many, Lady; but I would not willingly see one without its case."

"True, disembodied, and apart from its earthly tenement, the mind recoils at it."

"But as the spirit," resumed Motley, "has never yet appeared in any shape but the shape of the sound of the lute, played by the picture of nobody——"

"Thou hast yet courage to visit its haunts," cried the Baroness.

"Truly, Lady, courage is a good quality, and, being a good quality, I would not wear it out: yet not to use it, would
be

be to make it fall into disuse, and thereby become rusty, and unfit for service."

"Thou art a wise fellow, after all," cried the Baroness. "Here, take this money, visit nightly the wood, and shouldst thou bring with thee any intelligence which may lead to a discovery of this incident, thy diligence shall be rewarded."

"I will receive thy money, Lady; but although I should not lack wisdom to assist thee, take not from me, I beseech thee, my prerogative of foolishness. Adieu, fair Lady, adieu; may the god of mirth dispossess you of your present melancholy, and make you merry as the cricket; and as wise too; for the cricket slinks into his hole, when attempted to be caught by the hand of impertinence."

Clown

Clown sings.

From those eyes, on beds of roses,
Let not SWEET the tear-drop flow ;
Time oft wond'rous things discloses,
Stem, oh stem, this tide of woe.

“ Pretty words, and very well sung,”
cried the Baroness ; “ where didst thou
learn that stanza ? ”

“ I learnt it of the god of love, who
bade me address it to thy most excellent
beauty.”

“ Away—away,” said the Baroness,
“ thou flatterest ; take thy money and
begone.”

CHAP. V.

Lieve arboscel cui debil aura siede,
Lieve augellin che geme o che si move,
Lieve foglia che cade o che si scote,
Di terror doppia il dubbia cor percote.

ARIOSTO.

THE clown had departed, and the Baroness had nearly fallen into one of her accustomed fits of melancholy musing, when her attention was engaged by the entrance of Winifred, who had brought a letter for the Baroness. On opening it, she discovered it to be from Lord Broke her father, the friend and highly esteemed courtier

courtier of Henry the Seventh. She received it with satisfaction and delight ; but ere she had perused the contents, her lips trembled, her cheeks grew pale, and had not a plentiful shower of tears come at that instant to her relief, she would have fainted in the arms of her attendant.

“ Oh Winifred !” exclaimed she, at length recovering herself, “ I am the most wretched of human beings.”

“ Fresh troubles—alack, alack !” interrupted Winifred, “ what has happened, Lady? sure the Lord Fitzwalter——”

“ To-morrow,” resumed the Baroness, “ the Earl of Ormond, a nobleman of the first rank and power, arrives at the castle.”

“ Well, Lady, and what of that ?”

“ He is sent hither,” continued the Baroness, “ by the king, and comes bearing the royal authority ; by which, as
a ward

a ward of state, I may be consigned by marriage, to take possession of me and my domains. Lord Broke, my father, is to accompany him. Oh that I were some simple maiden, such as Ethelind, unincumbered by castles and domains, and therefore an object of state caution; for then I might follow my inclinations, for no one would seek my hand, and I might mourn my lost husband with uninterrupted sorrow."

"Ah, Lady," cried Winifred, "greatness is indeed a plague."

"And yet," continued the Baroness, "perhaps he may not wish to wed a melancholy mope like me; and from what I learn by this letter, he is of too noble a nature, to submit his inclinations in this particular, even to a monarch's will, and I may escape his nuptials."

"Why,

“Why, my Lady, methinks you must not build too much upon that,” cried Winifred; “he will not reject you and your domains too. But he has then, it seems, the power of rejecting you, whilst you, Lady, are denied the privilege of refusing him, however disagreeable he may prove.”

“Such, if I understand it, is the import of this letter,” resumed the Baroness.

“So runs my destiny.”

“Would to Heaven, you had escaped it by marrying Sir Reginald!” exclaimed Winifred.

“My situation would then have been even more intolerable,” said the Baroness, “than as the wife of the Earl of Ormond. This Lord, they say, is noble; but how great soever his merits and deserts, it will be to me the greatest misfortune, and to my

my feelings the most distressing, to receive him, or any one, for a husband. Indeed, Winifred, my heart dwells with the fondest delight on the memory of its first attachment, and the thought is to me most disgusting, which suggests the possibility of my receiving another lord."

"Oh, Lady! were you less handsome, and less powerful."

"Would to Heaven," cried the Baroness, "I were the most deformed of the human species, so I might escape my present embarrassments!"

"Suppose," said Winifred, "you were to invent some disguise, or use something which might discolour and conceal the beauty of your face. I have heard that weeds, and the juices of some flowers, applied to the skin, will so change the complexion of it, as to turn fairness into deformity:

deformity: what if we were to procure these juices?"

"I would not be averse from any innocent stratagem," replied the Baroness, "by which the dearest purpose of my heart, that of being allowed to remain in my present state of widowhood, might be secured to me; but should the Earl be, as he is represented in this letter, a man of peerless virtue and knightly honour, would it not be better to throw myself upon his generosity, by an avowal of my real sentiments respecting him, and a declaration of the decided aversion I do and always shall entertain, against a second union, and try to induce him to persuade the king not to insist upon my second marriage?"

"Ah, Lady, but if this should fail?"

"If it should, his character has been misrepresented ;

misrepresented; he cannot in that case be a man of honour: I will try, however, this scheme; I will at least make the attempt: should it not succeed, I have, I think, yet another resource, in the tenderness of a beloved and highly-revered father, whose influence at court, if properly exerted in the cause of his unhappy daughter, may save me from a grievance so full of evil."

"Well, Lady, with these hopes you will give consent to see the Earl."

"I must see him," returned the Baroness, "and he must be received with the honours due to his rank and character. His appearance here will be favourable to me in one respect; Sir Reginald Harcland, who must have been already impatient of my frequent absences from him, must now, in common decency, depart; let him

be informed immediately of the intended arrival of Earl Ormond ; and further, that it is my pleasure he should not await that event."

" Alas—alas!" cried Winifred, sighing heavily, " I would fain not be the messenger of such heart-breaking tidings."

" Go this instant," said the Baroness; " and convey this my message to the knight. Tell him, as the near kinsman of my Lord, I greeted him well, but that I now expect his departure."

Winifred frowned, but was retiring.

" Stop, Winifred," cried the Baroness; " tell him not the name of the guest whose arrival here we expect to-morrow. Say only it is a nobleman sent hither by the king. He will guess the motive of his coming hither ; if not, you may be more explicit. Plead your ignorance as to his

his name, lest, in the heat of his indignation, he should drop some expressions of an affronting nature, concerning this Earl, before my people, which may afterwards be repeated to his attendants, and thus reach the ear of their Lord. The knight is rash and impetuous; and we cannot be too circumspect, and hardly sufficiently cautious, in our endeavours to hinder any quarrel which might arise from such imprudence, between two nobles, both, perhaps, highly tenacious, and equally scrupulous, in respect to points of honour."

Winifred withdrew, and the Baroness retired to her oriel, where, seated, she marked the dewy-fingered night contending with the summer twilight, which refused to yield to her wonted sway. The lake spread its placid bosom full in view,
and

and no sound, save the sleepy twitter of the martlet from its earth-made nest in the fretwork of the parapet, varied the stillness of the hour. "This scene," cried the Baroness, "invites to tranquillity, at least till morning. Be hushed, my alarms and anxieties, I will not——"

At this instant the minstrel of the woods began his minstrelsy. "Oh Heavens!" exclaimed the Baroness, and again stood wrapt in listening astonishment. The music gradually approached; it swelled louder and louder: meanwhile the moon rose cloudless in the eastern sky, and threw its silvery gleam upon the rocks and ivy-crusted turrets of the castle; a thousand stars gemmed the heavens, and all seemed attention to the mysterious minstrel, when

“ At last a sweet and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill’d perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even SILENCE
Was took ere she was ’ware, and wish’d she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be thus displaced.”

At this time there was something in the tones of the music, even more affecting than usual. It was of a dirge-like sadness, yet so soft, so dulcet, that as the Baroness continued to listen, tears streamed involuntarily from her eyes. It now somewhat varied the measure, and she thinking, perhaps it might be the guardian spirit of her deceased Lord, to whom she conceived every sound bore some tender import, perhaps gently reproving her for her want of fidelity in receiving new suitors in his castle, or rather, as it seemed, warning her against some coming danger, seconded with

8 thoughts

thoughts like these, the sounds seemed to have obtained a talismanic power over the bewildered senses of the Baroness. They overpowered her feelings; a sudden faintness came over her. "Great Heaven!" exclaimed she in transport; and she sunk almost fainting against the arras. Ere she had time to recollect her scattered senses, and question the reality of what she had heard, the music ceased—it was heard no more.

The Baroness, trembling with an agitation which almost deprived her of the power of motion, retired to her room, and soon afterwards to her bed; but sleep forsook her pillow, and she arose on the eventful day, which was to introduce her to Earl Ormond, and dismiss Sir Reginald from the castle, without having once tasted the blessing of repose.

CHAP. VI.

Learn, cruel! learn, that this afflicted heart,

This heart which Heav'n delights to prove with tortures,

Did it not love, has power and pride to shun you.

Lord

SIR Reginald, on receiving the above message from the Baroness, which, though conveyed as a request, was, in effect, an order for him to quit the castle without delay, and especially on hearing that another suitor was expected, broke out into all the extravagances of the most violent frenzy. He positively refused to depart, without first seeing the Baroness. He even

even threatened to arm his vassals, and lay waste her domains, unless this was granted him. This his determination he sent the Baroness, who, uneasy at his violence, returned excuses.

He declared, on receiving these, he would assault her castle, in revenge for the insult of an abrupt dismissal. Although the Baroness was sensible she might rely for defence on the fidelity of her dependants, and was sure of redress, from the influence of her father at court, yet she thought it might be prudent to bend a little, to prevent evil consequences; and she agreed to receive him in the hall, surrounded by her retinue. To this he could not object, although he would have wished for privacy; and he returned a message of thanks to the Baroness for the honour she conceded him.

The Baroness immediately gave orders for his audience in form, which she intimated was intended as an honour due to a visitor and a kinsman, about to take his leave.

A chair of state, raised by a step in front, was placed on the upper platform of the grand hall, where the family dined on public occasions; and before it were spread carpets of tissue tapestry. The seneschal, at the head of twenty halberdiers, occupied two stations, one on the right, the other on the left, immediately below the platform; and all the higher servants, and such of the Baroness's vassals as the suddenness of the business could allow, were arranged in two lines below them. Behind the chair stood several of the inmates of the castle, who were either distantly related to the family, and

and were, on that account, allowed a constant table, or else were the sons of gentry connected with the family, and retained to serve as pages, and receive, in return, instruction and exercise in all those arts and accomplishments which suited the character of the knight or the courtier. At the doors were stationed parties of the yeomen of the guard, supported by the servants of the buttery and kitchen, habited in their best liveries, and bearing staves. The porter and his whiffers, clad also in their liveries of state, took their stations at the gates and various entries; and rows of archers and arquebusiers in the court, formed a sort of line of approach toward the flight of steps leading to the great hall.

All things being thus arranged, Sir Reginald, followed by the groom of his chamber,

chamber, was conducted to audience by the steward and two mace-bearers; and presently the Baroness entered from a side door, attended by Winifred and the maidens of her chamber, and seating herself on the prepared seat, received Sir Reginald with that state and dignity which the Barons Fitzwalter always observed on important occasions, in common with others of the same rank with themselves in the realm.

Sir Reginald, piqued by all these formalities, which he was sensible boded him no good, appeared with a haughty demeanor and proud look, seeming to acknowledge these attentions to be his due, although he was ready to receive them with scorn. The conflict of various passions, which reigned within him, was evidently great. Love and wounded pride
seemed

seemed to be struggling for pre-eminence, as he approached the chair on which the Baroness was seated.

The Baroness perceived, and was uneasy at these emotions; and apprehensive lest the warmth of his passion should hurry him into expressions which might be wounding to her delicacy, resolved to hasten the conclusion of an interview, which exposed those feelings to the observation of so many witnesses. From motives, therefore, of the most delicate consideration of the situation of Sir Reginald, as well as that of herself, she addressed him in a speech appropriate to the occasion, in which she acknowledged the high opinion she had conceived of him, and the strong sense she entertained of the honour he had designed to confer upon her, in his late proposals of marriage;

riage; an honour for which she assured him she was not less grateful than if she had consented to accept it. Then hastening to take her leave, she added, with great sweetness, "Farewell, Sir Knight, farewell; commend me to your honourable family; and be assured, though I cannot, under the present circumstances of my situation, invite your longer continuance in my castle; it will always afford me pleasure to hear of your welfare."

Then, as if anxious to prevent affording him any opportunity of reply, she arose, courteously bowing, and was retiring. Sir Reginald, little expecting that the audience he had so urgently requested was to terminate thus abruptly, would have remonstrated, and led the Baroness back to her seat; but she refused to be reconducted thither; and mildly observing
she

she had nothing further to add, withdrew, attended by her women, through the door by which she had entered; leaving Sir Reginald, notwithstanding the politeness of her address, and the manner in which she had expressed her sentiments concerning him, overcome with vexation and disappointment.

CHAP. VII.

— 'Twas but a dream:

But then so terrible, it shakes my soul;

Cold drops of dew hang on my trembling flesh—

My blood grows chilly, and I freeze with horror!

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Baroness, after having waited about an hour, anxiously expecting the departure of Sir Reginald, was informed, at length, that the knight, having relapsed into one of his accustomed fits of distraction and vehemence, had positively refused to quit the castle, unless the Baroness should first grant him another interview,

view, which he now insisted should be a private one. This his declaration and resolve was conveyed to the Baroness by Winifred, who warmly interceded for her Lady's consent to the Knight's request, as she called it, though from the authoritative terms in which it was dictated, it seemed rather to take the nature of a command.

“ Oh my Lady !” said Winifred, “ you must indeed see him once again ; you know not what may be the consequence of a refusal.”

“ I have, indeed, every thing to apprehend from his violence,” replied the Baroness ; “ why will he not remain satisfied with my determination, and what I have already granted ? he must, ere this, have known that my resolution is not to be shaken

shaken by any arts or arguments he can use."

" Ah, Lady ! but when he loves so tenderly, and mourns so grievously ! Had you but seen him last night—Oh, never shall I forget him !"

" Last night !" repeated the Baroness.

" Ah, Lady ! long after I took your message, cruelly desiring him to leave the castle this morning, in the middle of the night ; I had no sleep myself, not a wink, for I could think of nothing but Sir Reginald ; it was a stormy and very dreadful night ; the wind blew loud, and the rain beat hard against the windows, and the owls, from the turrets, screamed so dismally, that——"

" The wind was indeed tempestuous," interrupted the Baroness ; " but what had
the

the storm of the night to do with Sir Reginald?"

"You shall hear, Lady," answered Winifred. "The wind, as I was saying, howled dismally, and, as it rushed through the galleries, made such strange noises, for I suppose it was nothing but the wind, which, you know, often makes sudden squalls through the passages, that I began, I don't know how, to be strangely terrified, and so I got up: you, Lady, was asleep, I think, though as I made but little noise, and the wind continued very boisterous, you might not, perhaps, hear me, even if you were awake. Just as I opened my door, I saw Sir Reginald darting out of his chamber, pale as ashes, with a lamp in his hand, and nothing on but a long loose gown, which reached nearly to his feet; I asked him what was the

the matter, and where he was going. At first I thought he might be walking in his sleep; but I soon found he was as wide awake as I was.

‘Winifred,’ said he, with a look of terror and amazement, ‘have you seen any thing to-night?’—‘Seen any thing, Sir Knight,’ said I, ‘what should I see? I am not superstitious, for all this spirit in the wood, as it never comes into the castle, and keeps, as one may say, at a proper distance, and I hope you are not. Why, surely, you do not think you have seen any thing, do you?’—‘I don’t know,’ Winifred, said he: ‘but did you hear nothing?’—‘I heard nothing,’ said I, ‘but the wind, and the dismal hooting of the owls, from the buildings. But where are you going, Sir Knight?’ said I, ‘and why are you so frightened?’—‘I have had a
strange

strange dream, Winifred,' said he, 'if it was a dream.'—'A dream!' said I, 'la! I often dream dismal things myself, and they terrify me for a time; but when the light of the morning comes, these frightful fancies disperse, and I think no more about them—no more will you; so, pray, Sir Knight, go back to your chamber, lie down in bed, and try to get a little sound sleep.'—'The light of the morning will not, I fear, dispel the dismal images of the night,' cried Sir Reginald; 'but I will take your advice, Winifred, and endeavour——Oh, Winifred, if it were not for your lovely Lady's cruelty!' Then he sighed deeply, and entered his chamber; and I heard him pacing about the room for some time. When I thought he was in bed, I returned to my own apartment, but I could not sleep; for his
griefs

griefs and sufferings, which I really thought had affected his head, had so disturbed my mind, that I could not compose myself to rest. Oh, my Lady! you must, indeed, you must see him. He says, if you will grant him one interview in private, or with only me being present, he will leave the castle immediately."

"Says he this," cried the Baroness, "and, upon the honour of a knight, may I believe him? if so, upon these conditions, I consent once more to see him. Go, tell him this, and that in your presence I will instantly give him audience."

Winifred withdrew with this message from the Baroness, and shortly afterwards Sir Reginald entered the Baroness's anti-room, where she usually received her guests. She was reclining upon a crimson velvet settee, superbly ornamented with

with gold, attended by Winifred, when Sir Reginald approached. She arose on seeing him, and accosted him with the same winning courtesy of address which she always observed in her salutations. Sir Reginald, notwithstanding the permission granted to his request, entered with an air of wildness and distraction, that greatly alarmed the Baroness. He seemed to be struggling to speak, but could not; his eyes roved wildly over her figure; he leaned against the arras, and seemed, for a moment or two, to be utterly incapable of speech or motion.

"Give me not cause to repent, Sir Reginald," cried the Baroness mildly, yet with some emotion, her sweet eyes beaming softness and sensibility, "that I have thus, perhaps against my better judgment, in compliance with your importunities,

portunities, your very urgent solicitations, consented to grant you that audience you so earnestly desired before your departure from my castle. Till your avowal of the sentiments you entertain for me, which, for I have never in any instance deceived you, you well know not to be reciprocal, I considered and treated you as a friend and kinsman, the kinsman of my highly-revered and most tenderly-regretted husband. Had you not exceeded the bounds of that friendship and honourable esteem which you at first professed for me, and which, while it did not militate against my principles or my feelings, I scrupled not to return, my present command, which I again repeat, that you must immediately quit this place, would have been unnecessary. Could I have doubted the propriety of the measure

I am

I am enforcing, your present behaviour, Sir Reginald, would have convinced me of its indispensibility. Let me then save you and myself the trouble of all further altercation on this subject—a subject which has been the occasion of much uneasiness and anxiety to both of us, by repeating my most earnest wishes for your future welfare and happiness, and pronouncing a farewell, which I now expect to be final.”

“Heaven and earth!” exclaimed Sir Reginald, striking his forehead with vehemence, as if but newly awakened to a full sense and conviction of his present hopeless destiny, “is all then over?—am I doomed to be the most wretched, the most scorned of human beings?”

“You cannot long be wretched, Sir Reginald,” resumed the Baroness, “but
by

“Time and your tears,” resumed Sir Reginald, “have crazed and washed away the remembrance of him who was your husband; and bright, tearless, and beaming with renovated hope and promised joy, those eyes now seek another home than that which death has banished from them. Ormond comes forth to meet their willing glances—oh that, basilisk-like, there were death in them!—he comes, and is accepted.”

“Ormond!” reiterated the Baroness—then recollecting her injunction to Winifred, she added, “My woman, I find, Sir Knight, has been more communicative on this subject than I expected; it were well had she paid more attention to my orders.”

“What were those orders, Lady?”

“That she should convey a message,
informing

informing you that a stranger, whose name I bade her conceal, was to arrive this day at the castle, and that I expected and desired your departure should precede the approach of the expected guest."

"Your words, Lady, are the very echoes of those conveyed to me by your woman."

"Ah! how then could you know?"

"By no human tongue," said Sir Reginald, "was I informed of the name and quality of the person whose arrival here is expected."

"By no human tongue!" repeated the Reasoner; "you must then have had intelligence of it in writing: is it already so well known that the Earl of Ormond intends a visit at my castle?"

"Neither by letter, or verbally by any natural means," returned Sir Reginald,

"Have I been apprized of the Earl's intention, or the motive of his coming hither."

"Neither by a written account, or verbally by any natural means!" resumed the Baroness; "your words are paradoxes, Sir Knight; how then could you obtain your information?"

"Deem me not weakly superstitions, Lady, when I declare, I obtained it by means wholly supernatural—by a dream—"

"A dream, Sir Reginald!"

"By a dream or a vision, I know not whether one or the other, in which Baron Fitzwalter, your late husband, and my most dear friend, appeared to me!"

"Ah! my husband!" exclaimed the Baroness, her hands raised, and clasped together in an attitude of astonishment.

"Did I not tell you, Lady," said Winifred,

nifred, "how Sir Reginald, last night, rushed from his chamber, pale as death, and trembling with agitation, as from some sudden fright, and how he questioned me, whether I had seen or heard any thing?"

"Was this the dream you spoke of?" cried the Baroness; "was this the cause of his alarm?"

"Methought I was awake," pursued Sir Reginald; "yet it might be but a dream—a wild and fearful dream!"

"What was it?" asked the Baroness, whose curiosity was now greatly excited.

"It were imprudent to reveal it, Lady; the substance might alarm you."

"No matter, I must hear it," said the Baroness—"proceed."

"Do you command, Lady?"

"I earnestly entreat to know its import—haste, and inform me of it."

"I would be excused."

"Nay, prithee let me hear it."

"It may disturb and terrify you much."

"Still let me know it—I beseech, command——"

"Well then, I *must* obey.—Last night," resumed Sir Reginald, "it seemed, not long after I had retired to my bed, the moon shining full into my chamber, I saw a figure resembling, nay, the exact representation, of the late Baron, moving slowly towards me. The door of the apartment was closed, and even locked, so that no one could have entered. I watched its motions, in silent astonishment; it walked, or rather glided, to my bed-side; the curtains seemed to move untouched; and while the beams of a cloudless moon fell upon its face——"

"Oh,

"Oh, Heavens!" exclaimed the Baroness.

"I saw every lineament—it was himself—it was Fitzwalter."

"And seemed it not to be a dream?" cried the Baroness, shuddering.

"It seemed to myself," said Sir Reginald, "as though I were as much awake as at this instant."

"Ah! and how did it appear to you?"

"In complete armour."

"How looked it?"

"Pale, and very sorrowful."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed the Baroness, "yet it was *but a dream!*"

"And did the figure speak to you?" asked the Baroness.

"Yes; it was from this airy nothing—this unsubstantial form—this apparition,

that I learned of the purposed arrival of Earl Ormond."

"Amazing!" exclaimed the Baroness, "yet it was *but a dream*: and what said it of this Ormond?"

"It spoke of him in terms of hatred, expressed, however, rather in respect to his family than himself, those of Ormond and Fitzwalter having been long at variance."

"Did any thing else seem to pass?" asked the Baroness impatiently.

"Yes: it declared the spirit of Fitzwalter could not rest, while the enemy of his family remained a guest at this castle; and that——"

"What else?"

"I have promised to divulge no more."

"Yet

"Yet speak," reiterated the Baroness;
"it was, you know, *but a dream*."

"Were I fully assured of that," pursued Sir Reginald; "but no, I have sworn"

"I pray you be explicit."

"I must be silent: but let me conjure you, as you value the repose of your once honoured Lord, let not Ormond lead you to the altar."

"What, in that case, would be the penalty?"

"There, too, *I must be silent*. Urge me not, Lady—I have promised—nay, I have sworn."

"Said it aught else," cried the Baroness, "that, without a breach of promise and good faith, you might divulge?"

"Little, till parting; when, with a

look expressive more of sorrow than of anger, it breathed a wish——”

“ Ah ! what was it ? ”

“ That you had made a worthier choice than either Ormond’s love or widowhood.”

“ Amazing ! what meant it then ? ”

“ It looked at me ; and love, and sweet affection, beamed from its sunken eye. It was a noble, but a fearful sight.”

“ And most amazing ! ” pursued the Baroness ; “ but, remember, Sir Knight, *it was but a dream ;* and dreams are fashioned of the remnants of our waking thoughts. Said it, indeed, Lord Ormond would be here to night ? ”

“ It did.”

“ This was most strange ! such predictions, when verified, savour of supernatural

natural agency, even though conveyed in a dream. Lord Ormond, indeed, arrives to-night; and, as the day is wearing fast, I conjure you, Sir Reginald, to make our parting short."

"Yes, Lady," rejoined Sir Reginald, as if inspired with a sudden resolution, "*it shall be short.* Inexorable in your resolves, I leave you to your fate. Adieu, Madam, adieu."

"Adieu, Sir Reginald," cried the Baroness faintly; then, as if fearful of increasing his uneasiness by a constrained coldness, she held out her hand, adding, "Though I cannot give you my love, be assured you possess my esteem; and never, till you shall have violated the laws of honour and decorum, will you lose it. May prosperity attend you throughout

your days, and every earthly felicity be yours !”

Sir Reginald seized the hand she presented, and carried it to his lips, faltered out something he could not express articulately, and then hastened from the room, and in the course of another hour, publicly left the castle.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

————— I cannot love him;

Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,

Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;

In voices well divulg'd; free, learn'd, and vallant;

And in dimension, and the shape of nature,

A gracious person; but yet I cannot love him.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Baroness ruminated upon the subject of this extraordinary dream, which, in whatever way she contemplated it, partook largely of the marvellous. Sir Reginald had declared that he had not been informed by Winifred, or any other human means, of the expected arrival of

Earl Ormond. She had no reason to doubt his veracity; nor could she, even for a moment, imagine he would dare to impose upon her with a fiction. The image of the Baron had then certainly been represented to him in a dream, so like reality, as to leave him, even then, uncertain whether he had not indeed beheld his disembodied spirit. He had, in fancy, if not in reality, both seen and conversed with him. The conversation he had in part revealed, but bound, as it seemed, by a solemn engagement, to preserve an eternal silence respecting the rest, it remained involved in mystery and obscurity. When struck by an astonishing connection of incidents and events, rarely imaged in dreams, for the most part wild and disarranged, it appeared supernatural; and, while the possibility occurred

occurred to her that it might not be, as she had at first imagined, a mere chimera of the brain, in the absence of reason and reflection, but a real appearance, a shuddering sensation seized her, and the very blood seemed to chill in her veins.

With a view of obtaining a more thorough knowledge and satisfaction on the subject on which she had before questioned Sir Reginald, she addressed enquiries to Winifred, who, without the least hesitation or confusion, repeated the words she had delivered in her message to Sir Reginald; and thus, could a remaining doubt have lingered in her mind, it would now have been wholly dissipated. Winifred, who had been present at the interview between Sir Reginald and the Baroness, expressed an astonishment not inferior

inferior to that which the Baroness herself felt.

Anxious, however, to calm the mind of her Lady, which she perceived was greatly agitated and disturbed, perhaps more than she was herself aware of, she prudently discouraged the idea, that what had been thus forcibly portrayed to Sir Reginald's fancy, whatever appearance of reality it might assume, could be any thing but a dream; and by the recollection and enumeration of various others of a like nature, almost equally extraordinary, in which persons, not unknown to her, had seen, or seemed to have seen, their departed friends, she sought to divert the thoughts of the Baroness from the subject of her present agitation and astonishment, and prepare her for an interview with

with Earl Ormond, whose arrival was now hourly expected. Lord Broke, who had been dispatched by the King on an embassy to James the Third, who, at that time, filled the throne of Scotland, was to accompany him to the castle; but the nature of his mission requiring expedition, and not admitting of delay, he was to remain there only the night, and to proceed early on the following day to the Court of Scotland.

Never, perhaps, was there a period when the Baroness could be less disposed to meet the approach of an intended suitor, the favourite of a King, whose power over females of rank and estate, according to the usages of the realm, was even greater than that of a father, and especially over her, as the widow of the attainted Fitzwalter. One circumstance

afforded some consolation. Lord Broke would be present at the introduction of Ormond; and even should it be impossible for him to continue his stay at the castle, during the whole of the Earl's visit, she hoped to be able to win from him a promise to use his utmost efforts to prevent a marriage, which she could not think of without anguish, or even without abhorrence. So great, indeed, was her repugnance to every thought of this union, that she resolved, rather than become the wife of Earl Ormond, to dare the vengeance of the offended sovereign, stern and arbitrary as he was known to be; and, should he so far exert his prerogative, as to seize her fiefs, and confine her to the most remote and solitary monastery, to submit to any decree that might be passed against her, rather than sacrifice her

her

her principles and feelings to the uncontrouled sway of kingly power.

Winifred, whose mind, was not less busied by various plans than that of the Baroness, in endeavouring to suggest means to free her Lady from her present difficulties and embarrassments, warmly interested herself in her distresses; even those of Sir Reginald seemed forgotten; for Winifred, probably from a conviction that all she might urge, or say, in his cause, under the present unfavourable circumstances, would be ineffectual, forbore to mention even his name. All reasonable hopes of persuading the Baroness to this marriage were now at an end; and she yielded to what she really thought was necessity. She did not doubt, even for a moment, but that the Earl would be enamoured of the Baroness; and that
however

The trampling of hoofs, and the loud tone of the trumpets, echoing through the courts of the castle, seemed to declare the approach of the expected guests; and it was soon announced that Lord Viscount Broke, her father, attended by a few of his train, had preceded the Earl, who, with a long cavalcade of attendants, was then to be seen descending the hill, opposite to the eminence of the castle.

The Baroness, delighted and reassured by the intelligence of her father's arrival, preparatory to the introduction of the Earl, hastened to receive him, as he alighted from his horse at the great steps leading to the hall. Lord Broke, who tenderly loved his daughter, whom he had not seen for many months, embraced her with the warmest affection. But the overflowings of paternal tenderness were

soon

soon converted into sensations of the most poignant solicitude and lively regret, when the Baroness, throwing herself into his arms, entreated he would save her, if possible, from a destiny so full of misery, as that in which a marriage with Earl Ormond would inevitably involve her.

The good old Lord, who had pleased himself with the prospect of this projected alliance, which he considered as highly eligible, and to which he foresaw no obstacles, listened to this request with astonishment and distress. It is true, he had heard of his daughter's protest against a second marriage; but he had regarded it, as men are very apt to do, as the mere effects of grief upon a mind shaken by the first paroxysm of its sorrow, for the loss of a tenderly-beloved object; and, of course, had imagined that time would, ere
now,

now, have effected a change in a determination, which, as he conceived it to have owed its origin to a sort of derangement of intellect, would die away as the judgment might resume its functions. Nor, indeed, could he easily persuade himself that a Lady, beautiful and rich, and as yet hardly three-and-twenty years old, one too, who had once been the ornament and pride of the English Court, could thus seriously resolve to hide herself from the eye of public admiration, or with a constancy, inconsistent, as he thought, with the character of woman, that she would prefer the solitary state of widowhood, shut up in an ancient gloomy castle, situated among wilds and mountains, with no other companions than her own vassals and domestics, to a gay and brilliant court: he, therefore, smiling
with

with confidence in the truth of these his persuasions, mentioned that it must be impossible that she could enjoy more happiness in her present state than in the honours that now awaited her. He triumphantly expatiated upon the virtues and noble qualities of the approaching suitor, and bade her obey the commands of the King, and the injunctions of her father, and give him a favourable reception.

In vain, however, was every argument he could use; the Baroness could not listen; she could only weep in his arms, and with deep and suffocating sighs intercede for his pity, in saving her from the dreaded, hated marriage. "Oh, hear me, hear me!" exclaimed she, "my beloved father, when I solemnly declare, the moment that gives me to Lord Ormond will

will be the last of happiness and comfort I can ever know. And will you, oh! will *you*, my father, suffer your beloved daughter, your Gertrude, to be doomed to certain and irremediable misery, which it is in your power to prevent?"

"I should indeed be a wretch," said Lord Broke, "and utterly unworthy of being honoured by you as a father, were I to barter your peace to any considerations of worldly policy alone. But, look up, my sweet Gertrude, behold thy father. Do these eyes, moistened by womanish tears, beam aught but tenderness and affection? Oh, Gertrude, that I might but behold the accomplishment of the dearest wish of my heart—that I might but see my daughter's children! and not die mourning the extinction of a long line of nobles in myself."

"Oh!

"Oh, my father!" exclaimed the Baroness, "my dear, dear father!"

"Wait but the effects of time, my love," resumed his Lordship; "you may yet, impossible as it may seem to you, you may yet love a worthy and honourable husband."

"Oh, never, never!" cried the Baroness.

"Let me entreat you, however, my dear Gertrude," continued he, "to suspend your resolution, at least for the present; and let your own judgment decide as to this point. I have always considered your understanding as excellent; I know your feelings are delicately fine; but I think, with the fortitude you possess, you might so far surmount them, as to be enabled, in a short time, to think the man whom your sovereign has se-

lected for you, may be the one you would yourself have chosen. Nay, look not thus piteously on me, Gertrude; your father would persuade; he will forego his authority; he will never command. I will not say that Ormond possesses those courtly graces, by which your sex are often gained, and with which the young and blooming Fitzwalter first lured you to his arms; but let him not, on this account, be your aversion. Nursed on the lap of war, and trained to feats of toil and hardihood, even from his cradle, he has not had leisure, during the long contest between the Roses, to acquire those graces and accomplishments, on which many are inclined to place too high a value. But, trust me, Gertrude, he possesses qualities far more noble, and of sterling excellence. Amid the shocks of
battles,

battles, he combats with undaunted heart ; he has often fought, often conquered, and served the cause he espoused ; and these are actions of lustre to a Baron's name. Such a one you may expect to find him ; and, dignified, you may expect also, with what in him I know exists in full power, the purest principle of unsullied honour ; and this, my daughter, far outweighs, in sterling value, the flimsy qualities of fawning gallantry, and smooth-tongued compliment. Should such a man be pleased to take you, Gertrude, and who, seeing you, can reject so fair a prize ? the Royal Henry (mark you, what clemency !) gives back the forfeited lands of Fitzwalter, entire, to you and yours. Should you scorn his intimated wish, dread the disseizure of your large domains, and with poverty, perhaps a prison. 'Such is

the prerogative of England's crown. *Dare not*, Gertrude, the danger; be not ungrateful for offered grace; nor think your father loves you not, when he urges the suit of the valiant Ormond. Rather doubt his affections, when he forbears to exercise the right of a father, and only prays for that compliance, which he has most assuredly a right to command."

Though language like this may seem harsh to the ear of a modern female, yet it seemed not so in ancient times of feudal authority. The Baroness, soothed, and even softened to a degree of sensibility almost painful, wept her thanks, and pressed to her lips the hand of him who had thus confirmed her liberty; when now the tucket sounded at the barrier of the outer moat of the castle, and announced the approach of the Earl,

Lord

Lord Broke instantly hastened to receive him at the steps of the great hall; and the Baroness, with aching heart, took her station at the oriel, and saw the troop of guests enter the court.

First, in procession, came six horsemen, with trumpets and bugles, two and two, followed, in like fashion, by six more, with pipes and instruments of soft music. Then came a knight, bearing the shield of Ormond, rich in quarterings, and emblazoned, followed by two ancients, bearing penons of silk and gold. Next, the Earl, on a grey charger, armed in mail, with thread of gold, his beaver up. Then followed two fair pages, one bearing his lance, the other his shield of battle. Then advanced fifty lances with their esquires, preceding and following twenty grooms, leading twenty sumpter horses

G 3

bearing

bearing the Earl's equipage. The whole stood formed in lines when they arrived at the great steps : first, the trumpets and bugles, and next, the pipers, sounded a salute ; and then opening before the Earl, he vaulted from his steed, and, followed by his two pages, and six attendants, he received the salute of Lord Broke in form, and then entered the hall, where the greater part of the castle establishment stood, duly arranged by the steward, in their best array. After a few turns, and while a messenger was sent to the Baroness, Lord Broke and a page went to lead her in. And soon she came, attended by her damsels and pages, habited in her robes of ceremony, and handed by her father, who, advancing to the Earl, said, " Good my Lord, behold my daughter, the Baroness Fitzwalter ;
and

and my hope is, that, upon your mutual good-liking, ye shall soon be well acquainted."

The Earl, highly pleased with her modest beauty and grace, courteously bowed, and expressed his sense of the honour he then enjoyed; and the Baroness, in reply, gave, with tongue rather faltering, a suitable welcome to her renowned guest.

The nobles then retired, with their principal attendants, into an adjoining apartment, while the tables were covered, and then returned, and dined in the hall, at the chief table; while the knights and esquires of the Earl, and those of the Baroness, and the other principal part of her establishment, dined on tables below, on plenty of fish, venison, and fowl, and wine; while the minstrels, from the gal-

G 4

lery,

lery, regaled the ear with dulcet sounds, no less than the eye was gratified with the display of rich goblets, ewers, and platters of solid gold, and the taste by the *gust* of the most savoury viands.

The Baroness was relieved from the greatest part of the trouble of the entertainment by the presence of her father, who dictated the healths, though, sometimes, as he declared, at his daughter's suggestion.

The Earl, who was seated at her left hand, though lofty in his general demeanor, was greatly charmed with the Baroness, and shewed her every possible attention and courtesy. After a due stay at the table, the Baroness and her attendants retired, and left the table to their male visitors, who spent the remainder of the evening in festive hilarity, in which
the

the health of their fair hostess was by no means forgotten.

When retired to her chamber, the Baroness had leisure to contemplate the character of her new lover. He appeared to be between forty and fifty; his figure, though majestic, was rather athletic than graceful; his countenance was open, and strongly expressive; his eyes were large and dark; his eye-brows thick, and finely arched; his complexion was brown, and its original colour somewhat deepened by a long series of military services. Yet, though with a person rather striking than handsome, and a total defection as to all those graces and accomplishments which distinguish the courtier, Lord Ormond, nevertheless, possessed qualities, which might have recommended him as a lover to almost any other woman than the Baroness.

There was, indeed, something in his appearance and manner not easy to describe, but which, to the eye of discernment, if not of taste, rendered him even more interesting than if he had really possessed the qualifications above mentioned. The Baroness soon felt easy in his society—she was even pleased with it; she, however, wished only to partake of it in the presence of her father, who, to her infinite distress, was obliged to leave her, to pursue, early on the following morning, his route toward Scotland, on the business of the embassy from the English court. The Earl was to remain at the castle till the return of Lord Bröke.

CHAP. IX.

S'amor non é che dunque é quel ch'io ?
 Ma s'egli é amor per dio che cora e quale ?
 S'e buona ond' é l'effeto aspro mortale ?
 S'e ria ond'è sì dolce ogni tormento ?

PETARCH.

THE Baroness, amid the various incidents and adventures of the two last days, had not forgotten the mysterious minstrelsy in the woods, and in the hope of again hearing it, she waited near an hour in her oriel. To her surprise, however, and extreme regret, the music, which had been so constantly and regularly heard for

G 6

several

several successive nights, had ceased to fill the wood with its sweet mysterious melody: she listened, in the hope of catching some faint sounds; imagining, as it was now late, it might have retreated to the more distant woods; but all was silent; not even a note was to be caught. Disappointed and perplexed, she retired at length to her bed; but this incident combined with other recent events to prevent the approach of sleep; and having wondered that it came, she now, with an almost equal astonishment, wondered that it came not.

A repose she so greatly needed at length stole upon her senses; but owing to the perturbed state of her mind, and the various uneasy circumstances of the day, it was short and disturbed; and she awoke, with a terrifying apprehension that she

she had been awakened by a noise resembling the clattering of some loose pieces of armour, the sound of which seemed to proceed from an adjoining room, the apartment in which the late Baron had formerly slept. This chamber, which was one of the largest in the suite which composed the western front of the castle, had, ever since the demise of the Baron, been almost wholly deserted. The Baroness herself had never entered it; and, except Winifred, who took care sometimes to open the windows, and, once or twice, to have a fire kindled, in order to keep the furniture from being despoiled by the damp air from the lake, which nearly environed the castle, no one had ever visited it.

The Baroness, for a moment or two, was so thoroughly persuaded of the reality

lity of what she seemed to have heard, that she was no longer surprised that Sir Reginald should entertain the same degree of doubt and uncertainty relative to the appearance of the apparition he had described. For the instant, she was so entirely overcome with terror and apprehension, as to be rendered almost incapable of motion ; the reflection, however, that almost immediately succeeded, of the apparent impossibility of her having really heard any sounds, soon restored her to confidence, and she again sunk into sleep.

The returning light of the morning served, in part, to dissipate the fears which night and silence had engendered ; still, however, the Baroness could not persuade herself but that she had really been awakened by a noise, which she
could

could only compare to the clashing of armour near her bed; and which she seemed distinctly to have heard, even while wide awake. Conceiving, however, it might have been suggested to her fancy by some dream, which she had ceased to recollect, she resolved to mention nothing of this circumstance to Winifred, or any of her domestics; and to endeavour to turn her thoughts from a subject, on which it seemed impossible for her to obtain either information or satisfaction, from any thing they could say, to one that more nearly interested her, the proposed marriage with Lord Ormond.

The assurances of her father, that he would not insist upon, or even allow her to be disposed of, contrary to her inclinations, if he had the power to prevent

it, had greatly reassured and consoled her. One task, one painful task, however, awaited her, that of informing Lord Ormond of her resolution of not entering into a second marriage, and, of course, her rejection of his offers, should she perceive, by his manner, he was likely to make any.

The Baroness, although, independant of a high degree of beauty, she possessed more requisites for inspiring a strong and ardent passion than, perhaps, ever before fell to the lot of a single female, was, nevertheless, so entirely free from vanity, and all consciousness of superiority, either mental or personal, that she believed it possible, and even probable, that the Earl, having seen her, might not greatly desire the connection. It had been proposed to him by the King, who had intended it as

an

-an act of favour towards herself, rather than the Earl; who, being directed to seek her alliance, by no particular motive of interest or ambition, but merely in compliance with the implied will of his sovereign, would probably, she thought, desire as much as herself, that it never should take place.

Whether she should immediately inform him of her resolution of remaining single, whatever might be the penalty of her disobedience, or wait till he should have made some disclosure, which might enable her to discover what were his real sentiments concerning her, remained for some time a subject for frequent deliberation. At length, she determined to preserve a silence, for the present, respecting her intentions, at least till she should have had another interview with the Earl, when,

when, probably, something might transpire, which would afford her a further insight into his real motives and designs.

Whilst the Baroness was indulging the somewhat improbable suggestion that she might herself prove as much an object of indifference to the Earl as he was to her, Ormond was revolving in his mind, whether it was possible so young and beautiful a woman as the Baroness might think of him with the partiality he already felt towards her; and whether a disparity of years, and various other circumstances, might not prevent her from experiencing that strong affection, and tender interest, which he conceived essential to the happiness he was come to court.

From the idea of forcing the inclinations of one so lovely, and, apparently, so deserving, as was the Baroness, his soul revolted.

revolted with abhorrence and detestation. To have been voluntarily selected by her—to have been the object of her heart's choice, would have been bliss—would have been rapture! But could he hope? this was scarcely possible. “No, she cannot,” exclaimed he, “*she cannot love me!* Yet, ashamed as I am, to acknowledge even to myself that I have thus hastily imbibed a passion, I thought, I hoped, at least to have resisted, till I was convinced it was mutual, my happiness, if not my peace, depends upon—upon what? a woman. Oh! shame, shame, Ormond! a woman thou hast scarcely more than once seen, and in whose averted look, and sorrowing eye, thou hast already read thy sad, sad destiny; she will not, *she cannot love thee.*”

If such were the sensations and reflections

tions of the Earl on a first and second interview, it will not be deemed extraordinary, on a repetition of them, observing the same symptoms of depression, and tender grief, joined to a behaviour even more distant and constrained, he should have resigned all hopes, if, indeed, he could be said to have entertained any, of making any favourable impression upon the heart of the Baroness, who, nevertheless, preserved in her manners the same courtesy and politeness with which she had at first received him.

The conviction that he must not hope for a return of the affection he had already conceived for her, was accompanied by a degree of sorrow and disappointment, which so short an acquaintance seemed scarcely to warrant. Impatience succeeded to regret; and he now resolved,

solved, by a declaration of his real sentiments concerning her, to put an end to a suspense that was already become painful; and now again overcome with a timidity he could not surmount, he determined to defer the execution of this design, till he could do it without that awkwardness and embarrassment, which he was sensible would attend an immediate disclosure.

The Baroness was not less anxious for a developement she at once wished and dreaded; yet, although both were equally solicitous for explanations, neither had courage to enter upon them; and Lord Broke had departed, and the Earl been three days at the castle, and several good opportunities had presented themselves, and yet he had never declared the purpose of his visit, or the reason of his stay.

Of

Of the former, she had been informed by her father; and with respect to the latter, her penetration had already made it most obvious, that Earl Ormond regarded her with feelings of no common tenderness, such as were likely to be the cause of much embarrassment, and put the strength of her resolution to the utmost test.

CHAP. X.

"Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out,
Contagion to this world.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHILE the Earl and Baroness were thus the cause of mutual uneasiness to each other, the rest of the inhabitants of the castle were thrown into an universal terror and consternation, by an alarm, spread, as it appeared, by Ethelind, who, having been dispatched by Winifred to fetch some article of furniture out of the chamber of the late Baron, had declared she
had

Had seen a figure completely armed, and with the visor down, standing by the side of the bed. Another of the servants, on passing along the gallery, in which the same apartment opened, had observed a light in the chamber, as of a taper moving slowly about the room; and had distinguished groans, which seemed to proceed from some person or persons in great agony of mind or body.

The terror diffused throughout the establishment, by the mention of these extraordinary appearances, however natural, was severely reprehended by Winifred, who treated it as a tale calculated to disturb the family, insisted that it was no doubt false, and declared that Ethelind should sit up alone, for some hours, on the ensuing night, in order, as she observed, to be convinced that the bugbear
she

she had raised was the creature of her own silly imagination, and to prevent the rest of the domestics from being infected with her foolish fears.

Ethelind, who still persisted she had seen something resembling, as she thought, in figure, the late Baron Fitzwalter, and who was really herself an object of compassion, whether what she had described was real or imaginary, from the terror she exhibited, could not really believe that Winifred, however violent and unfeeling, would execute her threat of confining her in this apartment. Her surprise and distress then may be rather imagined than described, when Winifred, at the hour when the rest of the family were retiring to rest, led, or rather dragged her, to the dreadful chamber—for so, to Ethelind, it appeared;

where, closing the door upon her, leaving her one solitary lamp, which served only to render "darkness visible," she bade her repose with the spirit of the Baron, whom she tauntingly assured her would not fail to visit her. Having pronounced these words, she drew the bolt of the large folding doors, and departed.

The poor girl, who had no resource, either in her prayers or entreaties, against the tyranny of Winifred, was obliged to submit herself to her fate, however hard. A flood of tears had somewhat relieved the overcharged heart of Ethelind, when, throwing herself upon her knees, her innocent hands clasped together, she addressed a prayer to Heaven for her preservation from the perils and terrors that seemed to await her in that awful chamber, which hardly even an angel from
Heaven

Heaven could have convinced Ethelind, after what she had either really seen or imagined, was not haunted and disturbed by the spirit of the Baron.

She arose from her posture, trembling, yet somewhat reassured by the hope her fervent prayers might be heard, and that no terrifying vision might arise to appal her.

Hitherto all was silent. Her lamp burnt dimly in its socket; and the beams of a waning moon threw a melancholy uncertain gleam athwart the gloom of the chamber. She arose; and partly opening the shutter of one of the high gothic windows, looked out upon the surrounding hills. As she gazed, the sky became suddenly overcast; the clouds flew wildly over the disk of the moon; the wind rose high; and the low muttering of distant

H 2

thunder,

thunder, accompanied by a few flashes of vivid lightning, which, as it threw a momentary radiance throughout the apartment, seemed to give a horrible sort of animation to the few objects contained in it, conspired to overwhelm her with new fears and apprehensions.

Oppressed by the extreme solitariness of her situation, and the terrors that on every side assailed her, the little fortitude she had been struggling to acquire forsook her; and, throwing herself upon a large old-fashioned settee, placed nearly opposite the bed, she yielded to the agonies that oppressed her heart.

While, with eyes still streaming with tears, and a bosom throbbing with emotion, she sat, every moment expecting some dreadful image to appear before her, she heard a gentle noise, which resembled the

the creaking of a door, turning slowly on its rusty hinges, as if opening with great caution. No door, or any apparent possible means of access into this melancholy deserted apartment, except the large folding doors by which she had entered, opening into the corridor, was, however, to be seen.

Hardly had she time for conjecture, when the loose arras, with which the chamber was hung, became suddenly and violently agitated; and the next instant, while almost fainting with her fears, she heard her own name distinctly pronounced. "Do not be alarmed, Ethelind," said the same voice, "it is only me." The voice, she thought, was that of Edgar; but in the next instant, the person who had spoke emerged from behind the arras, which was hung, according to the fashion

the times, at some distance from the walls, and she perceived, as she thought, the clown. "Oh! Mr. Motley," cried Ethelind, "is it you? it was very kind of you to come hither; for indeed I am sadly frightened."

"Do you not know me, my dear Ethelind?" returned the same voice, which she was now convinced was that of Edgar.

"Know you! yes," repeated Ethelind, with an air of surprise, which was immediately converted into the most animated delight; "but why do I see you in this disguise?"

"I procured it of Motley," replied Edgar, "who, after informing me of Dame Winifred's design of confining you in this apartment, a piece of cruelty I conceive to be almost unexampled, agreed
to

to change coats with me ; so that if Winifred should enter, which I conceive not to be unlikely, if I cannot escape unobserved, I shall be mistaken for the clown, who, you know, may do any thing. I visited this chamber some hours ago with Motley, who was sorry to hear of Winifred's threat, and revealed to me the secret of the concealed door by which I entered ; which, I believe, not even Winifred herself is acquainted with, as it has been nailed up for some years, and is so completely covered with the arras, as entirely to escape observation. We had some difficulty in withdrawing the fastenings, particularly the large rusty bolts, of which there are no less than four, but finally succeeded in opening it, and fortunately without creating any alarm, the

Baroness being below with the Earl, and the rest of the family too remote to hear the hammerings and knockings we were obliged to make, before our purpose could be accomplished."

"Oh, Heavens!" exclaimed Ethelind, "what if Dame Winifred should return and find you here! she said once she would keep me here all night, but I think she cannot surely intend to be so inhuman; yet if she should—if we should be caught—if she should really come back, and see you in this chamber with me——"

"Never mind if she does," said Edgar; "she will certainly not discover me under this disguise. Alas! what uneasiness has this ill-natured old woman already given us, my dear Ethelind!" continued he, "and how dear to me are these moments,
these

these few short moments ! for even hours will appear but as moments, that I may now spend with you."

" Oh ! but the ghost," cried Ethelind, " the ghost—the ghost !"

" I care not for all the ghosts in the infernal world," exclaimed Edgar, with energy ; " what have *we* to fear ? we are innocent of any crime ; and is not innocence a shield that will be always found to be impenetrable ?"

" Oh, Edgar !" resumed Ethelind, shuddering at the recollection of her former alarm, " had you seen this dreadful apparition !"

" I do not think you have seen any thing, my dear Ethelind," rejoined Edgar ; " believe me, it was merely the creature of your own fancy, inspired by the melancholy of your feelings, caused

by the cruel treatment you receive here, and the extreme loneliness of this castle, combined with the ignorance and superstition of those you sometimes converse with. Answer me, Ethelind, was you not first told by some of the inhabitants of this place, that the castle was haunted? such a report was, I know, in circulation; shortly after the demise of the Baron, and has since been revived, owing, no doubt, in part, to the unaccountable mysterious strains of music which have been lately heard in the woods."

"I have often heard that music, Edgar," said Ethelind, "but it was so sweet, that I loved to listen to it, and was never in the least frightened, no, not even if I were alone."

"But you have been told it was played by a spirit?"

"Yes;

“Yes; and I have often thought so too; for, if it was a human being, he would certainly, ere this, have been discovered; beside, I think no minstrel but a celestial one, could play so divinely sweet.”

“This, then, my dear Ethelind,” said Edgar, “suggested the idea of a ghost, if not first to you, to some one, who has taken pains to impress you with the same opinion they themselves entertain. The spirit of the wood, by an easy transition, from the credulity of its inhabitants, becomes the ghost of the castle: this you have heard, and, it seems, believe.”

“No, it was I—it was I that first said I had seen the ghost,” cried Ethelind; “and it was for this Dame Winifred resolved to punish me, by confining me in this chamber.”

“And what did you see?” asked Edgar.

Ethelind described the apparition in the manner before mentioned.

“It is impossible,” exclaimed Edgar;
“it could not be!”

“Indeed, Edgar, it was really and indeed a ghost; I would not tell a story for the world; I am sure it was a *dreadful apparition*.”

“I cannot believe you really saw this figure, Ethelind, though I am sure you think you did. But why, in the name of all the saints at once, should it appear to you?”

“I do not know; but I am sure, Edgar, it did appear to me.”

“It is impossible; the spirits of the dead, I am persuaded, are not allowed to revisit the earth; and if they were, why should they——”

He

He was interrupted by a loud groan, which seemed to issue from an opposite side of the chamber; it was repeated, and succeeded almost in an instant, by a noise which seemed like the falling of a coat of mail, or some large piece of armour.

Ethelind screamed, and seizing Edgar's arm, wildly exclaimed, "It is coming—it is coming. Oh! hide me, hide me——"

"Hush, hush, my dear Ethelind," cried Edgar; "do not suffer yourself to be thus alarmed. All this may be nothing."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Ethelind, "nothing! Oh! Edgar, let us, I entreat you, let us leave this place. I shall die if I continue in it any longer. The door you entered will afford us a retreat through the passage to the western corridor; let us go this instant."

"By

“By no means,” said Edgar; “such an escape would betray us, and subject you, perhaps, my Ethelind, to new insults and persecutions.”

“But suppose the ghost should appear?”

“It will not harm us if it does,” replied Edgar; “but I do not yet give implicit credit to this strange relation of yours, Ethelind, though I am sure, as I said before, you most religiously believe it.”

“Oh! do not say so, Edgar, do not say so, even if you do not believe it, or, perhaps, as a punishment for your incredulity, it will appear to us; and if I were to see it once again——Oh! Edgar, whatever may be the consequence, let us instantly depart. See how the lightning flashes along the chamber! It grows more and more awful! and, hark! what dreadful

dreadful peals of thunder ! Oh ! save me—save me from such a combination of horrors as await me in this chamber !”

“ If you continue to be thus agitated and alarmed,” rejoined Edgar, “ you shall go, let the event be what it will. But strive, at least, to combat your fears ; believe me, when I say, they may not be so reasonable as you imagine : a partial gleam of light, serving only to throw the remaining space of this chamber into deeper gloom, and the accidental movement of something shook by the wind, rushing in from a fractured casement, joined to the terror which had previously taken possession of your mind, from the circumstances of your having been obliged to come hither unattended at a late hour in the evening, might altogether have

conspired to suggest to your imagination the fearful spectre you have described."

"Well, but the groans, and that terrible crash we heard afterwards!"

"For these," pursued Edgar, "I can only account from the winds and storms of the night, in which we are apt to hear noises we cannot always account for. What we conceived to be a groan, might be a sound caused by pent-up wind struggling for admission. In respect to the other noise, the place in which the armoury is disposed, is not, I think, very remote from this chamber; a thunder-bolt, or even a powerful gust of wind, might have burst open some door, and thus, having free access, may have thrown down, with its violence, one of the helmets or coats of mail, of which

which I know there are several in the *casemates*."

"But did not the sounds seem to proceed almost from this chamber?" said Ethelind.

"They did ; so near indeed as to surprise me ; as I believe the distance between this chamber and the armoury is a considerable space ; and the walls are of a stupendous thickness."

"It could not then be caused by the wind."

"I think it might, nevertheless. Although I believe what we have heard may hereafter be accounted for," resumed Edgar, "I own, I am yet greatly surprised, and confess should like to discover the mystery that seems to belong to this chamber, as also that of the music nightly heard in these woods. But I would now
seize

seize a moment or two to speak of circumstances, in which I am more deeply interested, as more nearly concerning my future peace, to tell my Ethelind that her Edgar has no wish so fervent and so sincere, as that which he feels for her happiness, and that he would even die to ensure it. But you are pale, Ethelind, you are still cruelly alarmed ; yet hear me, a few minutes only, and then, if you desire it, I will release you."

"I do, Edgar," cried Ethelind, "I do hear you," her cheek before, indeed, very pale, now flushed with crimson, and her eyes fixed upon the ground.

"I am very wretched," resumed Edgar, "and on your account ; I did hope, nay, I still hope, some time, your wished consent obtained, to call you mine. But I am destined to be unfortunate. My father, without

without consulting my inclinations, is about to contract me to one of the most opulent of the Baroness's vassals; and I am threatened with his malediction, and even with disinheritance, if I refuse the marriage. To love the woman he has selected for me, is as impossible as it is that I can ever cease to love you, my Ethelind, on whom my whole hopes of future happiness depend. Our time may be short; I must therefore be explicit. I am resolved, whatever may be the penalty of my disobedience, not to consent to this alliance; I will still venture to hope my dreams of bliss may be accomplished: could I, my Ethelind, once hear you say you love me, half my griefs would be dispelled: to urge immediately such a declaration, might be wounding to your delicacy; let me then only entreat, if Edgar

is

is not deemed unworthy of its possession, you will reserve your hand for him, till he can claim it without injury to himself or you. Speak—speak, my sweet Ethelind, may I hope——”

“ If I was convinced such an assurance would indeed give you pleasure,” said Ethelind, again blushing violently; “ yet if your father——”

“ Oh, talk not of my father,” rejoined Edgar, “ he may relent; besides, I can now think of nothing but the happiness of calling you mine, even though the time should be far, very far distant. You will then, my Ethelind, preserve those valued affections for one, who, although he may first have to struggle with various difficulties and vexations, may hereafter claim you?”

Tears and blushes were Ethelind's only
reply;

reply; they were sufficiently eloquent to be understood. Edgar took her hand, and pressed it tenderly to his heart. "And now, Ethelind," said he, "if you will, you shall depart."

"Yes; let us go," cried Ethelind; "yet, if it should be discovered that we have been here together——"

"Motley, perhaps, will befriend us," said Edgar. "But I have promised to release you, and if you cannot overcome your fears, Ethelind, I will."

While he spoke, they heard footsteps in the corridor. "It is Dame Winifred," cried Ethelind, "fly—fly——"

Edgar retreated behind the arras; and before Winifred had withdrawn the bolts of the folding doors, which she seemed to do with caution, as if fearful of being overheard,

overheard, had departed through the door by which he had entered:

“Well,” cried Winifred, who now appeared, “what have you seen to-night? has the ghost informed you of his reason for visiting this chamber?” She pronounced these words in a tone of exultation, as if enjoying her triumph over the feelings of a poor, innocent, unprotected girl.

Ethelind, who was not insensible to this new insult, calmly replied, “she had seen nothing.”

“Indeed!” cried Winifred, with a look of affected surprise, and, she thought, of incredulity; “well, you may come out then; I should not have released you so soon, if the night had not been so stormy; you may go to bed
then,

then, if you will, and inform the servants, to-morrow that you are a poor silly fool, as you have proved yourself full of whims and vagaries ; and that they must not, for the future, credit any thing you say."

Ethelind, who had no wish but to quit the chamber, hastily retired, without attempting a reply : Winifred remained behind, to close the doors. As she turned to take a survey of the apartment, she perceived a tall white figure moving slowly along, at some distance, without the arras. It turned—approached—glided by her—and disappeared.

Winifred shrieked aloud. At the same moment, a peal of thunder, which seemed to rend the heavens, burst over the castle, and seemed to shake it from its very foundations—the lightning flashed horribly through the chamber. The
phantom

phantom crossed her again—and again vanished from her view. Another, and a louder shriek escaped her, and she sunk senseless on the ground.

On recovering, she found herself in the arms of Ethelind, and two other female domestics, whom her cries had drawn to her assistance. To the eager and busy enquiries of those who attended her, Winifred replied only with self-accusations the most astonishing, declaring herself to be the most presumptuous and wicked of human beings.

After many questions from her assistants, which Winifred was, for a long time, in no condition to answer, it appeared that she had seen the ghost, so generally believed to haunt the chamber of the deceased Baron. Dame Winifred, who had been the most incredulous, had seen it,

it, and the reality of the appearance of this phantom was now ascertained beyond the possibility of a single doubt.

Amongst the general consternation occasioned by this incident, it will not be supposed that the Baroness could be long ignorant of so extraordinary a circumstance. She had left her bed in much terror and surprise, on hearing the shrieks of her woman, to enquire the cause of this disturbance; and having received all the information that could be given her, from those that attended her, had returned to it, with increased astonishment and perplexity. More ample intelligence of this extraordinary incident was conveyed to her in the morning, by one of her attendant damsels, which was afterwards confirmed by Winifred, and various others of the domestics; for all who had any

pretensions to appear in her presence, with earnest manner, and busy tongues, were eager in the relation of it; as also of whatever could possibly be supposed to bear any relation to the ghost; so that every circumstance of what had really happened, and a great many more, were quickly enumerated—the groans, the clattering of the armour, the appearance of the spirit, at one time armed cap-a-pie, at another wrapped in the dreadful livery of death, a winding-sheet.

To these superstitions, apparently so well authenticated, were added others, partaking of the ludicrous. Maclawney, the steward, who generally every evening enlivened his imagination with the necessary quantity of *hippocras*, which was a mixture of sack with honey, a draught in which Mrs. Winifred often
pledged

pledged him, had seen the ghost in as many forms as Proteus himself could assume, or as double-seeing eyes, like his own, could possibly figure. It had appeared to Peter, the butler, in the shape of a butt of drink, in the cellar, and vanished in the twinkling of an eye; to Nicholas, the coachman, in those of a blue dog, and a white horse; by one, it had been detected in the person of an owl, vanishing in an ivy bush; by another, in that of a raven, croaking at midnight. These birds, ill omened as they are sometimes deemed, indeed haunted the castle; for a number of them having made their nests in the turrets, or among the neighbouring woods, they were often heard to scream, and flap their wings dismally against the windows. It was observed, from the instant almost

that the music ceased in the woods, the ghost began his nightly rounds in the castle: it was therefore presumed, and at length confidently asserted and proclaimed, that the ghost and the minstrel were the same.

CHAP. XL.

Oh, ye eternal Powers

That guide the world! why do you shock our reason:

With acts like these, that lay our thoughts in dust?

LEE.

It was now utterly impossible to conceal the circumstance of Ethelind's confinement in the chamber, or of her having previously seen the armed figure, no longer doubted to be the late Baron Fitzwalter, (though this had been Winifred's declared intention), from the Baroness, who severely reprimanded her woman for her cruelty to the poor affrighted girl.

This Winifred endeavoured to excuse, on the plea of her having wholly discredited Ethelind's assertion, relative to this appearance, and of the seeming necessity of convincing her, and the rest of the domestics, of the absurdity of her wild fancies, for as such, she said, she had at first considered them; though she was now, she added, fully assured that something did really haunt that part of the castle, particularly the chamber formerly occupied by the Baron; although when seen by her, it had assumed an appearance quite different from that which Ethelind had described.

From this period, nothing but fright and confusion seemed to reign throughout the castle. Scarcely any of the servants dared go alone, even from one apartment to another, at any time, especially if they
in

in any way communicated with the haunted chamber; but, at night, they were quite paralyzed to any exertions; and the business of the buttery, the dairy, the stable, and the hall, were, in a manner, neglected. The servants all found reason to believe that the ghost had visited their department. The pantler knew it by the scattering of the bread, and the strange noise he heard one morning, as he hastily unlocked the door. "By our Lady," said the dairy-maid, "the ghost was last night among the milk-pans, for all the cream was gone this morning." The grooms agreed, the ghost must have been at night in the stable, and had been riding the mare; for that when they went in in the morning, the poor creature trembled, and was all in a sweat; and as to the hall, the ghost had made the penons.

eat or drink a morsel or a drop, in *propriâ personâ*, yet it added very much to the consumption of the stores of the castle, and the expences of the family, and was of course a very expensive visitant to the Baroness.

The clown alone remained uninfected by the general contagion. He even sported with the fears and terrors of his companions; and had more than once been detected, in his attempts to encrease them, for his own wanton amusement, a conduct highly displeasing to the Baroness, who, reprehending him for his folly, insisted upon his desisting, for the future, from so unjustifiable a practice.

“Why, Motley,” said she, “dost thou, for thine own sport, thus add to our present calamity, by augmenting the terrors of my people? and what is the reason that

thou art inclined thus to mirth and festivity, at a time when others are racked with fear and amazement?"

"Again my reason! again requirest thou my reason?" quoth the fool; "in troth, a most notable demand! Prithee, Lady, give me a little of thy ugliness."

"My ugliness!"

"Yea, truly, thy ugliness."

"Thou talkest madly, fool."

"Not a whit: if thou, having no ugliness to give, wilt give me thy ugliness, then will I, being a fool, and *ergo*, without reason, give thee my reason."

"Thy attachment to thy fooleries," resumed the Baroness, "is even greater than the state of thy condition requires from thee. Thou art as much afraid of being thought any other than a fool, as the bulk of mankind are of being branded with

with that title: and, in troth, thou canst not better prove thyself to be that which thou shewest, for dost thou not prefer folly to wisdom?"

"Yea, truly; as much as I prefer riches to poverty, drink to dryness, a good meal to an empty stomach, or a motley coat to a villanous ragged doublet; verily, I live by my wits, or rather by lacking my wits, which is the better of the two; for, having no wits to lose, I cannot lose my wits, and therefore cannot be frightened out of my wits by the sight of the ghost."

"Thou hast indeed the advantage in this," cried the Baroness; "and yet this is but the advantage of a stock or a stone."

"True, Lady, and, in so being, I am

the stoutest of thy household ; yea, verily, I am like thy castle, which, in troth, I would thou wert ; for, if thou wert like thy castle, thou wouldst be likely to keep thy castle, and not suffer thyself to bolt from it, like a quarry from a loophole in a turret, and let thyself be picked up and run away with by any earl or knight of high degree whatever."

"Go to ; thy buffoonery has been encouraged, till it borders upon boldness."

"Verily, Lady, these things are true, and strong, and bold, and are therefore bold in their outstanding, and less smooth and courtly than might be wished. But, nevertheless, since thou hast a most beautiful eye, a saintly smile, and a fair and most sweet demeanor, mayst thou regard them fairly, smile on them holily, and receive

receive them courteously ; and then the saddle would be rightly placed."

" Away, fool, thou growest muddy in thy fooleries, and art therefore almost run out to thy dregs. Beside, I am not disposed longer to bear with thee: go then, and be more discreet for the future ; let me not again hear that my people have been disturbed by thy unseemly and most ill-timed jestings."

" Like the bride before the priest, I say, obey, and straight am away ; and may both of us be fools enough not to fear stalking ghosts, and staring hobgoblins."

Not a day passed at the castle unmarked by some terrifying incident. Such of the Baroness's attendants as were obliged to pass through the corridor on their way to their Lady's apartment, which was in the

the same suit as that formerly appropriated to the Baron, never returned without some fearful account of noises issuing from the haunted chamber, such as loud knockings, groans, and sometimes the most dismal shrieks.

The situation of the Baroness, in the midst of her terrified people, was indeed pitiable. She could not, by any effort of her mind, by any exertion of her own reason, oppose or resist the universal torrent of terrors that now burst over her. She had never been taught to doubt the possibility of the supernatural appearances of the ghosts; on the contrary, she had imbibed tenets calculated to impress her with the conviction that such were really permitted, though she believed only in cases of particular emergency. Nursed and bred on the very bosom of superstition,

tion, within the walls of a convent, from whence she had only recently been removed at her marriage with the Baron; her mind had acquired somewhat of a romantic cast, which the pageantry and priestcraft of the religion of the age had in no small degree tended to encrease. The ardent affection too, verging upon adoration, which she had conceived and entertained for the Baron during his life, and which, with all her natural enthusiasm, she still cherished for his memory, had served to nourish in her mind these opinions.

That the nocturnal minstrel, or, as he had been usually called, the spirit of the wood, was some heavenly visitant, sent to watch over her, and sooth her griefs, with the powers of celestial harmony, was a sweet entrancing illusion; and when to
this

this was added the no less enchanting one, that this seeming wanderer of the woods was the spirit of her loved lord, her delight at hearing the music of his minstrelsy became altogether rapturous.

Widely different indeed was the state of her feelings at the appearance of the spectre, which seemed so alarming as to be marked only with horror. Had she listened only to Ethelind and Winifred's account of this extraordinary vision, she might still have denied implicit credit to the relation. But, when to these were added the recollection of the strange unaccountable noises she had herself heard on the night of the Earl's arrival at the castle, at which time the music had ceased in the woods, sounds which seemed to have issued from the very chamber in which the armed figure had been seen, as
described

described by Ethelind—when she thought too of Sir Reginald's dream, her apprehensions and distress knew no bounds.

The effect of these perturbations of mind produced an immediate change in her spirits, and she found it necessary to excuse herself by indisposition, from attending the Earl. This naturally led him to enquire into the cause, and, of course, the circumstances relative to the ghost were soon made known to him.

The Baroness, however, in her messages, made no mention of what had happened; nor did she afford him any immediate hopes of seeing her. She was, indeed, at present, wholly unfit to hold any conversations with her new lover, whose departure she now anxiously desired.

Her first resolve, on her dismissal of the clown, whom she had found it necessary

sary to correct for his levity and folly, was to send for Sir Osborne, her confessor, with whom she held a long conference in her oriel.

Having first given him a relation of every incident relative to this extraordinary appearance, with an account of Sir Reginald Harcland's dream, and every other circumstance connected with the subject of her present interest and deep concern, she requested his advice and assistance in her present distressing predicament.

The honest old father was overcome with a like astonishment and dread at this very extraordinary intelligence. "My daughter and Lady," said he, "this strange appearance, following the music of the minstrel of the woods, whom all our researches have not been able to discover,

cover, sheweth, most assuredly, the near approach of some mighty occurrence, relative to the fortune of the inhabitants of this castle; for the spirits of the departed are never permitted to pass the bounds of purgatory, unless for some weighty purpose; and when there is such a purpose, the holy saints plead for the indulgence of the solitudes of the wretched spirit, anxious about the welfare of those it has left behind, and obtain permission for them to come forth, and signify their desires. But who is there, Lady, in this castle, of such importance as yourself? and who so likely to concern themselves about your fortunes as your deceased Lord? It must be he, and he only, who assumes these forms, to signify to you either his approbation or his displeasure; nor will his uneasy soul find rest till he has accomplished his design;

design ; and what that is, Lady, you will
eftsoon know."

The Baroness, terrified beyond measure
to hear her own suggestions thus con-
firmed by her venerable confessor, the
depth of whose understanding she erro-
neously conceived to be equal to his
piety, paused for awhile to give vent to
the agonizing feelings of her throbbing
and oppressed heart.

At length interrupting his ghostly con-
solutions—"Instruct me," said she, "most
venerable and holy father, how to act ;
and, especially, how to deport myself to-
ward the Earl, who, I fear, must be the
cause of the distress of this perturbed
spirit ; is, perhaps, the object of the Baron's
hatred ; and whose visit and stay in this
castle may afford the reason why his soul
cannot taste repose.

"Though

“Though lost to me for ever in this world,” continued she, “yet still the image of my Lord is ever present to my mind; the sacred resolve I then made, when the heart-rending tidings of his death first reached my maddening sense, remains, and ever shall remain, unaltered. Oh! hear me,” added she, falling upon her knees, “if thou *canst* hear, spirit of the noble Fitzwalter—if thy perturbed soul is indeed sensible to the invocations of thy wretched widow, hear me when I swear, calling on every saint to witness this my vow, that not the acutest pang of misery humanity was ever fated to endure, nor death with all its horrors, shall ever compel me to unite myself with him, who directed hither by a sovereign’s proud command, now seeks for my alliance; no,

were he even possessed of all the virtues and manly graces that adorned thee, my Fitzwalter, never will I become the wife of this Ormond."

"*Swear!*" exclaimed a voice from an unknown quarter, and in an authoritative tone. The father started up, aghast and trembling.

"I swear!—I swear," pursued the Baroness, with a desperate kind of energy.

"Oh, Heavens!" added she, all her acquired fortitude suddenly forsaking her, "it was his voice—it was Fitzwalter! Help—help, holy father!" The monk, terrified beyond description, regarded her not; but, after some pause, he called aloud for assistance, though rather for himself than the Baroness.

Winifred, who had heard the voice of
Father

Father Osborne, was the first who entered, and in time to save her fainting Lady from falling ; other damsels of her chamber had also heard the call, and came, and helped to bear her to a couch, where she lay in deathlike insensibility ; while they beheld the terrified confessor falling on his knees by her side, in an agony of speechless and bewildered devotion.

After some pause, Winifred hastened to employ the proper remedies, and the Baroness began to revive. But, with returning sense, the cause of her alarm returned also, and the words she first uttered were, "*I swear !*"

She was conveyed soon to bed, and, after a shower of tears, became somewhat composed ; more so far than Father Osborne, who summoned all the rest of
the

the influence in the immediate performance of mass, partly to quiet the disturbed spirit, but more to be shut from the harrowing voice of the ghost, and the circle of society.

CHAP. XII.

Now, generous soldier, as you're truly noble,
Oh ! help me forth, lost in this labyrinth ;
Help me to loose this more than gordian knot,
And make me and yourself for ever happy.

Lxx.

ALL this extraordinary bustle could not take place without awakening the apprehensions of the family, and it was immediately whispered among every part of it, that the Baroness and Father Osborne had seen the ghost. So confident were they of this, that each had determined in his own mind, the form, the manner of its

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appearance, and the business on which it had come.

The Earl, too, was, at length, informed that the Baroness had experienced some extraordinary alarm; but as to the particulars, he had not been able to obtain any satisfactory information. He did not fail to send anxious and respectful enquiries after her health; and, when he repeated the same in the morning, he was agreeably astonished, by a request for an interview with her in the anti-room of her apartment.

He had scarcely entered, when the Baroness appeared, supported by two of her women, weak, pale, and trembling, habited in a loose robe, indicative of every neglect of form and ceremony; while yet it displayed the elegance and beauty of her person, to which, however, she herself
seemed

seemed utterly inattentive, being, to all appearance, wholly occupied by the sense of her own sorrows.

Hardly had he begun to express the deep and tender interest he felt for her happiness, and his concern at her present distress, from whatever cause it might arise, when the Baroness was at his feet, conjuring him, in the most urgent and energetic terms, to forego all pretensions to her hand, for that now she was fully assured the spirit of the Baron could not repose in peace, while he continued her guest.

The Earl, although he had never entertained much hope of winning the affections of the Baroness, and had determined, with the most honourable delicacy, not to accept her hand, even though it held the wealth of kingdoms, unless voluntarily

given, was equally astonished at the extravagant emotions evinced by the Baroness, and vexed at the strange cause to which he understood they were owing. But the agitation of his beautiful mistress, now at his feet, rendered reasoning and reflection impossible; and served to excite in his benevolent heart, a degree of tenderness and compassion, beyond what he had hitherto felt.

His first effort was a request to assist to raise her, from her posture; but she, perceiving his purpose, when he caught her hand, exclaimed, with eagerness, "Never, never will I quit the humble attitude of a suppliant, till you, my Lord, all-generous as I know you are, free me from a condition so full of misery and terror! Oh, leave me—leave me; give peace to the perturbed spirit of my Fitzwalter; and

and let me bless, even with my latest breath, the name of Ormond !”

“ Little would you know of that Ormond,” cried the Earl, with a tender, yet dignified air, “ were you to believe he would suffer any interested or selfish motive to interfere with the peace of one, to whom his heart, even on a first approach, paid an involuntary homage. Rise, noble Lady, and hear, while I solemnly assure you of my ready acquiescence in any request you may form, though even at the expence of my own happiness and peace ; but, let me entreat you to explain, what to me appears inexplicable, how my continuance here——”

“ To you, my Lord, this circumstance must indeed appear singularly strange,” interrupted the Baroness ; “ but know, this castle, once the abode of quiet and

K 3 uninterrupted.

uninterrupted tranquillity, has, of late, become the scene of wonders, of alarms, of horrors, almost unparalleled ! But, first, my Lord, let me thank you, as far as language may enable me to express the feelings of my gratitude, for your generous, your noble compliance with my request ; and let me also beg you to excuse an abrupt address, prompted, as I was, by terror and despair, to a violation of the established rules of courtesy and hospitality, and of that respect most undeniably due to your character and rank. Hear me also with kindness, oh, my Lord ! while with a heart gratefully confiding in your honour and goodness, I freely declare, that were it possible for me to have transferred my affections from my deceased Lord to any living object, and no insuperable objection existed why your suit should not prevail,

prevail, I know no one, especially after the proofs you have afforded me, of an unsullied honour and the purest integrity, on whom my choice would have been more readily fixed than yourself."

"For this candid and endearing avowal, most revered and beloved Lady," cried the Earl, bowing till his knee touched the ground, "let me, in my turn, express my warmest acknowledgements. Oh!" added he, after some pause, and seizing the border of her robe, which he pressed respectfully to his lips, "had it been possible!—but no more, (laying his hand upon his breast with an affecting energy, indicative of a painful effort of self-command), it must not be—there is no alternative. Oh, Gertrude, Gertrude! why—why so lovely?" He stopped, rose respectfully, and recovering himself, after an-

other pause, courteously enquired the occasion of her sudden indisposition, and of the violent emotions by which he had just seen her so greatly distressed ; adding, in a manner which rendered it impossible to doubt his sincerity, that she might command ; and happy should he be, would the Baroness Fitzwalter accept the services of Ormond.

The Baroness, who felt herself much reassured, by the friendly offers and obliging deportment of the Earl, and was now become more composed and able to converse, gave him a brief detail of the mysterious minstrel of the woods ; then of the armed phantom seen by her domestics ; and, lastly, of the awful words uttered by some supernatural being, in the hearing of her confessor and herself.

When the Baroness had concluded her
narration,

narration, the Earl, who had listened to it with much attention, and occasionally made enquiries respecting the particulars, thanked the Baroness for her condescension, in indulging his curiosity; and immediately observed, that most assuredly the whole of these events must be the tricks of imposture; and that some ill-designing person must have undertaken to excite alarm, for the accomplishment of wicked purposes. "When," said he, "and where is the ghost to be seen? let me be permitted to wait its approach, and, perhaps, I may be enabled to render you, Lady, some valuable service."

The benevolent Baroness, shocked to think that any person should experience any of those horrors she herself had so lately felt, shuddered at the offer, and painted the terrors of supernatural appearances,

ances, and the danger of those mental delusions, which they had the power to produce at will upon the strongest minds.

“Lady,” said the Earl, “a soldier ought not to shrink from any danger, or cherish any fear. As such, I request permission to undertake the adventure. But recollecting that it is to free you from alarm, trouble, and danger, I must urge my request; nay, as a knight, I must not be denied, what I may surely claim as such—May I be permitted to see the haunted chamber?”

“Most assuredly,” replied the Baroness.

“My principal woman, and some others of my domestics, shall attend your Lordship in your visit, which may probably induce you to alter your intention.”

“Never,” said the Earl: and himself and his attendants proceeded immediately, each

each with very different feelings, to the haunted apartment.

The first care of the Earl, on his entering, was to examine the various doors opening into the passages, and other communications with the several parts of the castle; the bed underwent a scrutiny, as did also the arras, which, as we have before observed, was hung, according to the custom of those times, at some little distance from the wall. "All," says he, "seems orderly at present; the ghost is certainly not here now; but may perhaps be seen by one who may choose to honour him by attending his leisure, and that must be done to-night."

"To-night!" repeated the Baroness, to whom the Earl immediately imparted his intention, "to-night!"

"Yes, to-night," replied the Earl;
"the

"the sooner the truth is known, the better; and as no man would wish to encounter too many dangers at once, I have to request that a fire may be kindled, that I may not be annoyed by the chilling damp of that room, which is by far the most formidable thing to be apprehended there."

The Baroness, finding he was bent upon his purpose, and that no arguments were likely to induce him to abandon it, proposed that he should be attended by one or two of his own people.

"By no means," said the Earl; "I would watch there alone."

"Alone, my Lord! Oh, think what may be the consequence!"

"I am fearless of all consequences," cried the Earl: "some mystery overhangs this castle, particularly that chamber, which

which I am resolved to investigate; and, from what I learn, the ghost has never appeared to two persons when together; and would not, in all probability, appear to me, if attended. Besides, if the ghost has really any serious business here, on which he comes, it is probably with me, and me only; as, from what I can learn, he did not commence his gambols previous to my arrival."

"My Lord," cried Father Osborne, who had entered while the Earl was conversing, "you ought not to speak thus lightly of things so solemn."

"Your courage, my Lord," resumed the Baroness, "is undoubted; but still, methinks you need not put it to such a test as this; as it can hardly be supposed that you are alone the object of

its

its visitings; but if it is seen by you, you know not how much you may be terrified."

"I will dare the utmost horrors of my ghostly opponent," pursued the Earl; "from whom, should he choose to render himself visible, I may hope to obtain some information highly useful."

"Good Heavens! my Lord, you do not surely intend to accost it?" cried the Baroness.

"Indeed I do," replied the Earl, calmly.

"Holy St. Agatha!" exclaimed Winifred, crossing herself: "but what if it should decoy your Lordship into some horrid place, and there leave you?"

"I will follow it, wherever it may lead," cried the Earl, "if, by so doing, I can but obtain possession of its purposes."

“ Oh, my Lord !” said the Baroness, “ let me, if possible, dissuade you from a scheme so rash.”

“ I will not only watch one night,” continued the Earl, “ but two, or even three, if I still think there is any probability of discovering what the ghost is, and what its intentions.”

“ My Lord,” replied the Baroness, “ I must cease my persuasion ; to oppose you farther, would imply a want of courtesy, unworthy your courage and your rank.” The Earl bowed ; and again expressed his hopes that he might be able to render her the service he wished, by quieting her fears and those of her household ; and then, the Baroness being about to retire, respectfully quitted the room.

About the hour of midnight, the Earl, taking the key of the haunted chamber, repaired

repaired to his station, himself clad in armour, because he had heard the ghost came so accoutred, and bearing his trusty sword as his defence. The rest of the inhabitants of the castle retired at the same hour to their respective apartments; their minds all busily engaged by the subject of the Earl's enterprize, which seemed to them equally rash and extraordinary.

END OF VOL. I.



Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall Street.





